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EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2023

BELFAST
ROYAL
ACADEMY

Title	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Summary	This policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.
Purpose	To ensure that all pupils, parents and staff are aware of this policy and its application in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion for all pupils and staff.
Operational Date	September 2023
Next Review Date	August 2026
Author	Vice Principal (Pastoral)

To be posted on School website	Yes
Date and version posted	September 2023

Related Documents

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Anti- Cyber Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN Policy
- Pastoral Calendar/Assembly Themes
- School Development Plan

Rationale and Aims

Belfast Royal Academy has developed this policy as a statement of its commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within our school community. It seeks to ensure that all members of the school are valued equally, regardless of religion or belief, disability, race, gender, sexual orientation or transgender identity. Whilst socio-economic status is not a specified ground under the equality legislation, the barriers and inequalities experienced by equality groups can also be exacerbated by poverty and social exclusion. As a result, prejudicial bullying of any sort is unacceptable and recorded in accordance with the Anti-bullying Policy in school.

The Academy recognises the wider value of education, beyond solely the achievement of qualifications, allowing individuals to develop an understanding and experience of the value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds. We recognise that the school is enriched by the diversity that each individual brings and are committed to creating a safe, welcoming environment for all, where each learner can flourish, knowing that differences are respected.

The School seeks to:

- create a caring, supportive environment in which there is trust, fairness, respect and safety.
- give all pupils the opportunity to develop to their full potential in abilities, interests and aptitudes.
- create an environment in which the individual importance of all pupils is recognised.
- engender an atmosphere in which all pupils feel that their achievements are recognised and that their presence is valued.
- ensure that all pupils are prepared for the adult world by offering a well-designed curriculum that promotes diversity and provides critical skills that challenge prejudice and negative stereotypes.
- ensure that all pupils understand that they have an important role to play in what is becoming an increasingly complex multi-racial society.
- ensure that all students receive Personal Development and Citizenship through Learning for Life and Work, in which they learn about themselves and their responsibilities to others.
- ensure that the school is free from prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination.
- foster tolerance, understanding and mutual respect.

Belfast Royal Academy seeks to support pupils as they journey through life. We acknowledge that we cannot separate academic study from personal and emotional development. We understand that pupils will need support along the way and aim to provide whatever is possible to ensure that they have access to meaningful learning.

The premise remains the same - every child matters and matters equally - but the approach to meeting the needs of each pupil is taken on a case by case basis, ensuring the support is specific to the individual and in consultation with parents, staff, members of the Board of Governors and other relevant external agencies.

Equality Objectives

Once every three years, in addition to its equality and diversity policy, the Academy will publish 3 equality objectives (or priorities) aimed at promoting equality of opportunity, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between pupils, informed by statistical information and linked to the school development plan.

Religion or belief

Belfast Royal Academy recognises that we educate pupils with various religious beliefs and none. This is particularly important given our location, developed through the delivery of Religious Studies, in line with statutory guidelines.

Our responsibility is to:

- Provide pupils with extensive opportunities to explore, question and appreciate their own faith, in order that they can develop spiritually.
- Develop a knowledge and understanding of a variety of faith and belief systems in order that pupils can live and work in a culture of mutual respect and tolerance within our increasingly diverse community in school, city, and nation.
- Show our commitment to the promotion of the spiritual and moral development of each student, in conjunction with the pursuit of academic excellence.
- Create an environment where individuals are valued and their dignity is respected. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that each young person's view is valued. This development of respect for self, environment and others is a high priority in the teaching of Religious Education at Belfast Royal Academy.

The school practices collective worship of a broadly Christian nature, but seeks through the annual themes for pastoral care to make assemblies and other school related activities as diverse and inclusive as possible.

The school may participate in ceremonies and festivals celebrating other faiths, however, parents can choose to remove their children from collective worship, or ask that their children does not participate in any of these activities, for any reason.

Discrimination on the basis of a religion or of a particular belief is not tolerated in this school and is dealt with in accordance with the Action Plan for Positive Behaviour as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy and/or the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Disability

Belfast Royal Academy will not discriminate against a pupil or a member of staff because of their disability as stated in Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). The school will seek to take positive steps ensure that pupils with a disability can access and participate in the education and other activities they provide.

The School will make reasonable adjustments in order to remove the barriers a pupil with a disability will face to allow the pupil to access and participate in education in the same way as other pupils. This means that, unless they have a justification for not doing so, the school will make reasonable adjustments so that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to other non-disabled pupils.

Belfast Royal Academy aims to be fully accessible. Lifts have been installed in the Crombie, Bruce, Jackson, Darbyshire and Jackson Buildings and an external ramped access has been constructed to cover the Louis Lord and Pollin Buildings. All buildings in the school site are now accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Toilets with disabled access are available in the Crombie, Jackson and the Technology Buildings. Changing facilities in both the Sports Hall and Swimming Pool have been converted to cater for wheelchair access, and a specially adapted chair allows access to the swimming pool for pupils with mobility difficulties.

Discrimination on the basis of a disability is not tolerated in this school and it dealt with in accordance with the Action Plan for Positive Behaviour as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy and/or the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The Special Education Needs Policy in Belfast Royal Academy reflects our inclusive approach. The SENCo (working closely with the Principal, Senior Leadership Team, Assistant SENCo, Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants) is involved in the strategic development of inclusive practice within the school. The Learning Support Department aims to ensure that Academy pupils can access appropriate educational provision. The culture, practice, management and development of resources in our school are designed to ensure all pupils' needs are met.

Race

Pupils are encouraged to enjoy the multi culturally diverse nature of our school and have opportunities to celebrate the world as it is and as we would like it to be. On such foundations pupils will develop positive attitudes to the pluralistic society.

Through a well-balanced, culturally inclusive curriculum we will help pupils challenge prejudice and stereotypes and provide opportunities for social and cultural development. Parents, staff and

pupils will be made aware of the school's commitment to mutual respect through pupil notes, assemblies and through the curricular and extra-curricular life of the School.

Discrimination on the basis of race is not tolerated in this school and is dealt with in accordance with the Action Plan for Positive Behaviour as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy and/or the Anti-Bullying Policy. Racist symbols, badges or insignia on clothing or bags are forbidden in school and pupils are not permitted to use their own language to deliberately exclude other pupils.

Social background

Whilst socio-economic status is not a specified ground under the equality legislation, the barriers and inequalities experienced by equality groups can also be exacerbated by poverty and social exclusion.

With over 50 feeder Primary Schools, Belfast Royal Academy educates pupils from across Belfast and further afield. Irrespective of social-economic background, pupils are educated together and are given the same opportunities.

The Governors' Fund seeks to provide funding for parents who require additional support for their son/daughter's participation in various extra-curricular activities and/or trips.

Sexual orientation and Gender Identity

Staff, pupils and parents have a shared responsibility to ensure that all pupils are treated equally and with dignity, regardless their gender identity or their sexual orientation.

Staff will seek to:

- foster self-esteem in LGBT pupils.
- demonstrate by example the school's ethos of inclusivity and ensure that language and action reflects this.
- be alert of any signs of distress and other possible indications of prejudice based bullying and respond swiftly according to the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- raise awareness of the transgender community through Assemblies and the taught curriculum, such as through the delivery of the Personal Development strand of Learning for Life and Work.

The Academy recognises the role that a school can play in supporting a transgender young person and commits to following the best practice guidance as set out in the Education Authorities *"Guidance for Schools on Supporting Transgender Young People."* The Vice Principal (pastoral), will act as the 'designated teacher' and as the point of contact for any pupil who is questioning their gender identity or identifies as transgender.

Terminology relating to LGBT issues

- **Binding** refers to the flattening of the chest to create the appearance of a “male” torso. This is commonly done by **trans men** and some **non-binary** people to hide breast tissue. It can be done safely and in moderation, but usually requires purpose-made clothing (binders).
- **Bisexual:** People who are attracted to other people of both genders.
- **Cisgender (often shortened to cis)** When one’s gender identity matches the gender assignment given at birth.
- **Coming out:** refers to a young person’s experience of telling others that they are questioning their gender identity or identify as transgender. It is a term that was initially used to describe the process that people went through when first revealing to other people that they were gay.
- **Gay:** Two people of the same gender who are attracted to each other. Two men or two women.
- **Gender assigned at birth:** is a term used to describe the gender that someone was identified as at birth, usually by looking at their genitalia. Sometimes people use the term "biological" to describe the sex and gender someone was identified as at birth. However, some people tend to avoid this term as they feel that it privileges biology over their lived and felt identity.
- **Gender Binary:** The socially constructed idea that someone’s gender can be one of two options, either male or female. At time of publication, UK law only recognises someone’s gender as either male or female. **Non-binary** people and some **intersex** people fall outside the gender binary.
- **Gender confirmation (or reassignment/realignment) :** Many trans people undergo medical procedures, including hormone replacement and surgery, to align their bodies to their gender. This has several names, but is most often called gender confirmation or gender reassignment. It is also sometimes referred to as sex assignment, though this term is falling out of use.
- **Gender diverse/non-conforming/variant:** is a term used to describe young people (usually those under 12) whose gender expression does not conform to gender stereotypes in clothes, interests, behaviours or mannerisms e.g. a boy who prefers dolls and dress-up play or a girl who wears short hair and refuses skirts.
- **Gender Dysphoria:** describes the distress that a person can experience because they feel a mismatch between the sex they were assigned at birth and their felt gender identity. Gender dysphoria is also a clinical diagnosis.
- **Gender expression:** is a person's gender-related appearance including clothing, haircut, speech and mannerisms. Young people may express their gender in ways which are not

considered traditionally feminine or masculine. It should be noted that someone's gender expression does not always match their gender identity.

- **Gender fluid:** Denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity or gender expression is not fixed and shifts over time or depending on the situation.
- **Gender identity:** is a person's deeply-felt internal and individual perception of their gender, for example: boy, girl, transgender and other diverse gender identities.
- **Gender neutrality:** The idea that policies, language, and other social settings should avoid distinguishing. According to people's **sex** or **gender**, in order to avoid discrimination. E.g. in sports, careers, changing rooms etc.
- **Gender recognition:** The process through which many **trans** people go through to have their gender legally recognised by the government. Gender recognition in Northern Ireland is only available to single trans people over the age of 18 who have a medical diagnosis of **gender dysphoria**. It is not available to non-binary people as UK law only recognises the **gender binary**.
- **Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC):** is a certificate which enables transgender people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all transgender people will apply for a GRC - you currently have to be over 18 to apply.
- **Gender role:** The social role assumed of people based on their gender. Stereotypical gender roles for boys/men and girls/women are often seen to be regressive and harmful when imposed on young people.
- **Intersex:** A variety of conditions that lead to atypical development of physical sex characteristics are collectively referred to as **intersex conditions**. Intersex people are assigned a legal gender of either male or female at birth – some grow up to be transgender. Some persons with intersex conditions prefer the term "disorders of sex development"(DSD).
- **Lesbian:** Two people of the same gender who are attracted to each other—two women.
- **Legal transition** refers to changing the name or gender marker on legal documents (e.g. birth certificate, driving licence or passport).
- **LGBT:** Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.
- **Medical transition** refers to medical interventions (e.g. through hormones or surgery). Some transgender young people may begin to medically transition while at school or other educational setting and may, for example, be prescribed hormone blockers to delay puberty. But not all transgender young people will take those steps. Outcomes in gender identification are diversifying. As well as many young people who do start physical interventions, there are those who choose not to do so - or who decide to wait a while.
- **Non-binary:** is a term used by young people who do not identify exclusively as a boy or as a girl (sometimes referred to by young people as 'genderqueer' or 'gender fluid').

- Some non-binary people may have a gender identity which is located along a fixed or variable point on a continuum between male and female, while others will identify as neither male nor female. The degree to which non-binary young people may present as masculine, feminine or androgynous will depend on the individual. Sometimes a young person may use the term non-gender (alternatives include agender, nongendered, genderless, neutrois). This term refers to those without a gender identity, who see gender as wholly a societal construction which they do not subscribe to.
- **Queer:** is a term used in the past as a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by LGBT young people in particular those who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation. It is still viewed to be derogatory by some and should be used with caution.
- **Sex:** is the classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including, chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.
- **Sexual Orientation:** describes a young person's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to others. Transgender young people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a young person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to boys/men would typically identify as a straight girl/woman.
- **Social transition** refers to the reversible process that transgender individuals take to present as the gender they most strongly identify with (e.g. wearing clothes, adopting a different name or using facilities which correspond to their gender identity). Some young people socially transition as a way of alleviating gender dysphoria or exploring life in another gender role.
- **Social presentation:** The way a person "presents" is their **gender expression**. How a person presents affects how their gender is perceived by society. A person who presents in a feminine way is more likely to be perceived as female.
- **Transgender or Trans:** When your gender identity or expression is different than what was assigned to you when you were born.
- **Transphobia:** Analogous to homophobia, this is the hatred or prejudice against **trans** people. This can take many forms, including violence, bullying, social rejection and discrimination by institutions.
- **Transsexual:** a term used in the past, (similar to homosexual), to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the 'opposite' gender to the one assigned at birth. Most young people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*. If the term is preferred, it should be used as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.
- **Transition:** is the term used to describe the process to bring a person's physical characteristics more into conformity with their gender identity and presentation.

Gender Identity Services for Northern Ireland

There are two specific healthcare services for trans people in Northern Ireland, both based in the Belfast Trust area. However, young people of all ages can access these services but require a **referral to be made usually be from a GP or mental health professional.**

Knowing Our Identity

(Child & Adolescent Service Gender Identity Development Service)

Beechcroft,

Foster Green Site, 110 Saintfield Road, Belfast,

BTS 6HD.

02890 638 000

Brackenburn Clinic

(Adult Gender Identity Service) Centre for Psychotherapy,

Shimna House,

Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road,

Belfast, BT8 8BH.

02890 638 854

brackenburnclinic@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Support Organisations

There are several organisations which specifically support trans young people and their families across Northern Ireland. Details of trans sector organisations other than those already referenced can be found on

transgenderni.com

Gender Jam NI support trans, non-binary, questioning and intersex people in Northern Ireland.

They hold regular social meetups for anyone under the age of 25, as well as fight on behalf of young trans people in education and healthcare. They can advise on accommodating young people within your organization.

Website: genderjam.org.uk

Phone: 028 9099 6819

Twitter: @GenderJamNI

Facebook: fb.com/GenderJamNI

Sail is support group for the families of gender variant or transgender individuals of any age who are in need of help, support or advice, whatever the circumstances. They run regular parent support meetings across Northern Ireland, and they can advise on family support issues relating to young people in your organisation. SAIL also provide training to schools and organisations on trans issues.

Website: sail.ni.com

Address: Rainbow House, 28a Monaghan Street

Twitter: @SAIL_NI

Youthnet * network for the voluntary youth sector Youthnet is a strategic network of voluntary youth organisations that exists to support the voluntary youth work in Northern Ireland. Youth net has been highlighting the needs and experiences of LGB&T young people since 2003 following the publication of the Shout Report.

Website: youthnetni.org.uk

Email: admin@youthnet.co.uk

Facebook: fb.com/YouthnetNI

Twitter: @YouthnetNI

Address: Youthnet, 5th Floor, 14 College Square

North Belfast, BT1 6AS

Telephone: 028 9033 1880

LGBT Support Organisations

Cara- Friend **LGB&T Youth** is a regional youth service for young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, or who are questioning their identity, aged 12- 25.

Website: cara-friend.org.uk

Twitter: @CaraFriendNI

Address: 9-13 Waring Street, Belfast, BT 2DX

Telephone: 028 9089 0202

The Rainbow Project provides an Advocacy Service which can help LGBT people, including trans young people, with housing problems or homelessness.

Website: rainbow-project.org

Twitter: @TRPNI

Email: info@rainbow-project.org

Telephone : 028 9031 9030

HERE NI supports lesbian and bisexual women (including trans women) and their families. They provide peer and social support, family support, sexual orientation training and other services.

Website: herein.org

Twitter: @Here_NI

Email: hello@hereni.org