



Moorland Federation

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MOORLAND FEDERATION EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

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Equal Opportunities Policy (October 2025 – Moorland Federation Edition)

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Consultation: This Policy has been subject to consultation with recognised schools' trade unions and is recommended for adoption by all Somerset schools.

This policy is based on and fully aligns with the Somerset Local Authority Equal Opportunities Policy (2025). It has been adapted for use across the Moorland Federation to reflect local leadership, governance structures, and reporting arrangements while maintaining compliance with LA and national equality legislation.

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1. Principles

Our schools are committed to being workplaces where all job applicants and employees are treated as individuals with dignity and respect and where positive challenge to violation of human rights, harassment, victimisation and discriminatory

behaviour is part of daily working practice. Our schools encourage good communication between all employees in order to understand underlying reasons for, and thereby avoid, potential conflicts.

This policy reflects the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), ensuring that we actively eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with different protected characteristics. The school also ensures that equality and inclusion are embedded in all aspects of employment and service delivery.

2. Policies

2.1 Our policies and procedures provide all job applicants and employees with equal opportunity without harassment, victimisation, or direct or indirect discrimination because of legally protected characteristics (either by association or perception).

2.2 Our schools will prevent detriment arising from disability and comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for applicants and employees who have declared a disability.

2.3 *We will also ensure that policies are impact assessed through our Equality Analysis process to identify and reduce any disproportionate effects on individuals or groups with protected characteristics.*

2.4 *This policy complements our Equality Information and Objectives Statement and Accessibility Plan, which outline how equality duties are met and monitored across the Federation.*

3. Workplace Practices

3.1 Our schools will not condone behaviour at work, near the workplace, or at work-related social functions, which discriminates, harasses or victimises job applicants or employees because of legally protected characteristics.

These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This also applies where:

- an employee is treated less favourably because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic even if they do not have that protected characteristic; or
- an employee is treated less favourably because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic even if they themselves do not have that protected characteristic.

3.2 The school is committed to fostering an inclusive culture where diversity is valued and difference is celebrated. Behaviour or language which undermines equality or inclusion, including microaggressions or unconscious bias, will be challenged and addressed constructively.

4. Duties and Responsibilities

4.1 All employees have a role to play in treating each other as individuals with respect and dignity at all times, taking responsibility for ensuring their behaviour and actions comply with and support this policy.

4.2 All employees and Managers must aim to avoid potential conflict by identifying problems early and attempting to deal with them, for example, through non-confrontational discussion.

4.3 Senior leaders and governors have a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to demonstrate due regard to equality implications in decision-making, workforce policy, and service provision. This includes publishing measurable equality objectives and reviewing progress annually.

5. Equalities Learning

5.1 All Managers / Leaders / Governors have responsibility for ensuring that their employees understand this policy through induction, probation, and further learning, and are helped to put that learning into practice.

5.2 All Managers / Leaders / Governors will receive opportunities to learn about their duties and responsibilities through management induction, probation and further learning.

5.3 The school will provide equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) awareness training to all employees at least every three years, or more frequently when legislation changes. Equality considerations will also be built into safeguarding, recruitment and appraisal training modules.

6. Unwanted Conduct

6.1 Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment constitutes harassment.

Any employee found to have committed harassment, victimisation or discrimination against job applicants, employees, volunteers, suppliers, service users or the public because of protected characteristics will be subject to disciplinary action.

6.2 An employee who feels they have suffered detriment as a result of harassment, victimisation or discrimination directed at them because of a protected characteristic, or who has witnessed such behaviour directed at others, will be supported in seeking resolution.

6.3 Managers must seek resolution promptly and appropriately where they become aware of unacceptable behaviour and ensure support is provided for all involved.

6.4 Our schools have adopted a Dignity at Work Code of Practice. The Grievance Procedure provides a framework for dealing with complaints about bullying and harassment.

6.5 Complaints will be managed in line with whistleblowing protections where appropriate, ensuring that employees are not victimised for raising equality or dignity concerns.

7. Third Parties

7.1 Our schools will take reasonable steps to prevent harassment by third parties related to a protected characteristic where the school knows, or ought reasonably to know, that an employee is at risk.

We will take seriously allegations of deliberate discrimination by volunteers or staff employed by suppliers and will ensure such allegations are investigated and appropriate action taken.

7.2 The school will ensure that contractors and visitors are made aware of our Equality and Dignity at Work expectations through induction and contractual clauses, and that discriminatory conduct by third parties will not be tolerated.

8. Terms and Conditions of Employment

8.1 Our schools will comply with the legal duty to provide equal pay for work of equal value and provide benefits and facilities equally and proportionately to all employees.

8.2 Our schools will follow flexible employment policies, which recognise the skills and expertise of employees and the need to retain them.

8.3 Employment policies and practices will be assessed to identify potential detriment to those with protected characteristics based on irrelevant perceptions or unjustifiable assumptions.

8.4 Managers / Leaders and Governors will ensure informal practices do not directly or indirectly disadvantage employees in accessing career opportunities.

8.5 Equality considerations will be embedded into pay progression, performance appraisal, and flexible working processes. Where disparities arise, the school will review and address potential systemic barriers.

9. Recruitment, Selection and Promotion

9.1 Our schools aim to eliminate bias and discrimination in recruitment, selection and promotion practice.

9.2 When vacancies occur, Managers / Leaders / Governors are expected to consider the possibilities of job sharing, part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.

9.3 Employees / Governors selecting candidates will undertake relevant recruitment and selection training.

9.4 Our schools will not ask job candidates about their health at an early stage in the recruitment process, unless such questions are necessary for:

- establishing whether reasonable adjustments are needed for assessments;
- establishing whether a candidate can carry out an intrinsic job function;
- monitoring diversity;
- addressing employment gaps;
- taking Positive Action; or
- determining whether a candidate has a disability that is an occupational requirement.

9.5 All recruitment materials, adverts and interview processes will reflect our commitment to equality and inclusion. Data on recruitment outcomes will be monitored annually to identify and reduce any under-representation across protected groups.

10. Employee Development

10.1 Managers / Leaders / Governors are expected to take account of equality policy and practice when appraising employees and offering development opportunities.

10.2 Managers / Leaders / Governors are expected to ensure that opportunities for professional development, in-service training and qualifications are open to all and selection is based on open and objective criteria.

10.3 Mentoring and coaching opportunities will be promoted across the workforce to support under-represented groups in career progression and leadership development.

11. Positive Action

11.1 Positive Action may include proactive advertising, job design, support networks, helplines, mentoring, coaching or training.

Our schools will adopt Positive Action to encourage recruitment and improve access amongst those under-represented at all levels in the workforce if it reasonably thinks that:

- people who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to the characteristic or have different needs; or
- participation in an activity by persons who share a protected characteristic is disproportionately low.

11.2 Proportionate steps may be taken to meet their needs or enable or encourage them to overcome or minimise disadvantage or participate in the relevant activity.

11.3 Any Positive Action initiatives will be monitored for effectiveness and compliance with Equality Act 2010 provisions to ensure proportionality and fairness.

12. Breaches of the Policy

Any employee found to have breached policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

All incidents of alleged discrimination, harassment or victimisation will be recorded and monitored by senior leadership. Trends or patterns will be reported to governors annually to ensure oversight and accountability for equality practice.

Summary of Updates (October 2025)

1. Added statement confirming full alignment with Somerset Local Authority Equal Opportunities Policy (2025) and adaptation for Moorland Federation context.
2. Inserted explicit reference to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and Equality Act 2010 compliance.
3. Added requirement for Equality Impact Assessment (Equality Analysis) on policies and decisions.
4. Introduced EDI awareness training every three years for all staff.

5. *Expanded expectations around third-party conduct, contractors and visitor compliance.*
6. *Linked equality responsibilities to appraisal, recruitment, flexible working and pay progression.*
7. *Added requirement to record and report equality data and incidents annually to governors.*
8. *Included whistleblowing protection for equality-related concerns.*
9. *Revised Positive Action section to ensure proportionality and fairness under the Equality Act.*