

DISABILITY EQUALITY POLICY & SCHEME



VANTAGE ACADEMY TRUST

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CONTENT

		Page No
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Roles and Responsibilities	5
3.	Purpose and Vision	6
4.	Positivity, Promotion and Participation	7
5.	Eliminating Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment	9
6.	Taking Steps to Meet Disabled Peoples Needs	9
7.	Involvement of Disabled Pupils, Staff and Parents	10
8.	Action Plan	11
9.	Disability Equality Scheme	12
10.	Recruitment, Development and Retention of Disabled Employees	13
11.	Educational Opportunities Available and The Achievements of Disabled Pupils	15
12.	Information Collecting and Reporting	16
13.	National Equality Standard (NES)	17
	Appendix A - <i>Action Plan for School</i>	19

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Vantage Multi Academy Trust (herein 'the Trust'), we believe that diversity is a strength which should be respected and celebrated by all those who regularly attend, or occasionally visit the facilities. The Trust is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, staff and those who are involved with the school or visit the facilities who have a disability and we will endeavour to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which people feel free to disclose their disability and to participate fully in school life. The Trust is fully committed to helping children and adults with disabilities, achieve more.
- 1.2 We will ensure that the school environment is accessible to all and we will make any reasonable modifications to ensure that disabled people have full access to all services and activities at our premises.
- 1.3 This guidance is for Local Advisory Board (LAB) Representatives, School Principals, and the whole of the Trusts school workforce.
- 1.4 The information contained provides information on the Disability Equality Duty (DED). The Trusts prime responsibility is making sure the duty is met. However, in practice the School Principal and senior staff with support from staff, students, parents and carers, and members of the wider Trust community will all need to play a role to ensure the duty is met.
- 1.5 Reference to 'disabled people' includes disabled children, young people and adults, as students, employees, LAB representatives, parents and carers and other members of the wider community that might use Trust premises for leisure or other activities.
- 1.6 An agreed definition of disability as in the Equality ACT 2010 is:

A person (P) has a disability if:

(a) P has a physical or mental impairment

(b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Further reading on definitions and determinations of disability can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/1>

- 1.4 The definition of disability covers a broad spectrum of impairments including:
- Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - Epilepsy
 - HIV
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Hearing or sight impairments
 - Mobility difficulties
 - People with mental health conditions or learning difficulties/disabilities.
- 1.5 The DED is a proactive duty for schools. The duty does not give additional rights to disabled people, nor does it replace the existing legislation. Instead it places new responsibilities on schools to actively promote equality of opportunity for all disabled people.
- 1.6 Disability equality is about making things fairer for people with disabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 as amended in December 2006, replaced by the Equality Act 2010 gives the Trust a new duty ('The Disability Equality Duty') to promote disability equality.
- 1.7 The Trust is committed to:
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination
 - Eliminating disability related harassment
 - Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
 - Encouraging participation of disabled people in public life
 - Promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people

- Preparing and publishing a disability equality scheme to show how they will meet these duties.

These elements together are referred to as the general duty. The trust also has specific duties, which provide us with a clear framework to work by. The main aim of the general duty is to promote disability equality. The Trust body and whole school workforce will need to look at everything we do, on a day-to-day basis, and think about how equality of opportunity for disabled people can be better promoted. To do this successfully we will need to embed disability in all management practices and policy development.

1.8 This scheme and the accompanying action plans set out how the Trust will promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

1.9 The Trust plans to increase access to education for disabled students in the following 3 ways:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school curriculum.
- Improving the environment of the Trust to increase the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education and associated services.
- Improving the delivery to disabled students of information which is provided in writing for students who are not disabled.

1.10 This scheme is incorporated into the Trust's improvement action plans to continuously increase access to education for disabled students.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Whilst the prime responsibility for making sure the duty is met lies with the Trustees, in practice the LAB Representatives, School Principal and leadership team, with support from staff, students, parents and carers, and members of the wider school community, will all need to play a role to ensure the Trust meets its duty.

PURPOSE AND VISION

3.1 The purpose of the Trusts scheme is to show how we are going to meet the duty to promote disability equality for disabled students, staff and parents. Our overall vision strives to reflect the six elements in the general duty.

3.2 We recognise the importance of and wish to create ownership of the scheme for both students, staff and parents. The Trust has developed the following statement which identifies the overall purpose and direction of the Trusts scheme:

These are our educational aims, which reflect our values:

- To offer a high standard of teaching, learning and achievement, by providing a challenging, varied and broad curriculum, which includes; a strong element of first hand experiences and opportunities for enrichment.
- To create a happy, secure and stimulating environment where children can acquire the skills and knowledge needed for them to develop to their full potential and beyond.
- To be a community where the Christian values of respect, honesty and tolerance allow the value of each individual to be appreciated, their contributions welcomed, and where positive relationships are encouraged.
- To promote the Trusts schools as a centre of learning for the whole community.

3.3 The Trust aims to be a cohesive and diverse environment in which:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all staff, parents and students.
- Difference is positively valued and celebrated.
- People from different backgrounds and social groups have similar opportunities.
- Strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and social groups.
- Everyone understands the importance of local diversity in making the Trust a great place to visit and learn.

- 3.4 We know that in order to provide the leadership necessary to realise this vision we must exemplify the principles of valuing diversity in all our activities as a service provider and as an employer.

POSITIVITY, PROMOTION AND PARTICIPATION

4.1 Positive Attitudes

- 4.1.1 The Trust promotes positive attitudes to disability in its citizenship and Personal Social and Health Education/Personal Social Education lessons. E.g. During one lesson students discuss the barriers that disabled people might face in participating in the democratic process. The teacher and teaching assistant ensure that the disabled students in the class are given the opportunity to give their views and have any necessary support or advocacy support to participate in the debate. The teaching staff show that they value the contribution of disabled students, and other students are given the opportunity to hear and understand the views of their disabled peers.
- 4.1.2 Positive attitudes to disability will be promoted in a wide variety of ways within the Trust. This includes ensuring:
- Staff model respectful attitudes to disabled students, staff and parents.
 - Representation of disabled people in positions of responsibility in the school.
 - That there are positive images in school books and other materials.
- 4.1.3 Positive attitudes towards students will be incorporated into lessons. Promoting positive attitudes are a very helpful way in which we can encourage the development of an ethos that will support and promote disability equality.
- 4.1.4 The following examples show how positive attitudes are built into the whole Trust ethos:

- Including positive and diverse images of disabled children and adults in school publications.
- Having a poster campaign in the school celebrating diversity and equality for all groups.
- Having disabled staff and LAB Representatives as visible role models.
- Holding an annual disability awareness day.

4.2 Promoting Equality of Opportunity

4.2.1 The Trust will consider every aspect of life in school and will draw on information and views of disabled students, staff and parents to identify priorities for our scheme.

4.2.2 Many of the reasonable adjustments that the Trust makes and many of the actions taken as part of our accessibility plans already promote equality of opportunity. The distinctive features of action taken under the disability equality scheme are:

- The more proactive approach
- The requirement to cover disabled students, staff and parents.

4.2.3 It is by the active engagement of parents and the consideration of information that we will be able to identify further action to promote equality of opportunity.

4.3 Encouraging Participation in Public Life

4.3.1 Disabled students, staff and parents will be encouraged to participate where they already see their disabled peers included and succeeding in all aspects of the life of the school and beyond. Where disabled students, staff and parents are represented in senior, responsible and representative roles, this provides particular encouragement.

4.3.2 The Trust will encourage participation in other ways including having disabled staff in lead roles, ensuring that the school council includes disabled students, and having disabled students in visible positions of

responsibility as prefects or as members of youth forums. Again, meeting this element of the general duty will also help us to meet the other elements of the general duty.

ELIMINATING UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

- 5.1 The collection of information is crucial to identifying aspects of school life where there may be discrimination. The Trust is already data rich and it is the intelligent interrogation of existing information, for example, on achievements and exclusions that may identify the priorities that our Trust needs to set.
- 5.2 The Trust will not be able to meet its 'Every Child Matters' outcome to 'stay safe' unless we recognise that disability related bullying may be happening, and where identified, we will take steps to deal with it. The Trust needs to raise awareness amongst staff and students of disability-related harassment. An understanding by the whole school workforce of the nature and prevalence of bullying and harassment will help us to recognise and address it. The involvement of students themselves is a key feature of effective systems for combating bullying.
- 5.3 Disability-related bullying and harassment is not restricted to students. Disabled staff, parents, carers and other users of the Trust may also experience it and we will consider what steps may need to be taken to identify and address disability-related harassment for them, also.

TAKING STEPS TO MEET DISABLED PEOPLES NEEDS

- 6.1 In meeting this element of the general duty the Trust will ensure that our scheme builds these 'more favourable' considerations into the policies and practices and that we have considered the needs of disabled students, staff and parents. Action will include:
 - Providing additional coaching or training for disabled students, staff or parents
 - Special facilities for disabled students at breaks and lunchtimes

- A policy of interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the minimum requirements for a job
- Giving disabled staff more time to mark students' coursework if their disability means that it takes them more time to do this
- Offering telephone or email appointments or home visits to disabled parents and carers that might find it difficult to get to the school
- Adapting uniform requirements for certain disabled students

INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PUPILS, STAFF AND PARENTS

7.1 Students

7.1.1 The Local Advisory Board will strive to ensure that disabled students, staff and parents will be involved in all stages of the development of the scheme: in identifying the priorities, how these priorities should be met in the action plans and how the school will assess its progress.

7.1.2 The Trust recognises that involving disabled people is not only a requirement of the duty but brings real benefits in terms of:

- Providing insights into the barriers faced by disabled students, staff and parents
- Expertise in identifying ways to overcome these barriers
- Improving working relationships between schools and disabled students, staff and parents.

7.1.3 The Trust will involve disabled students in the following ways:

- Through the school council
- Meeting with small groups of students
- Creating a more informal social occasion for disabled students, through an e-forum

- Arranging a meeting across the local authority or a cluster of schools

7.2 Disabled Staff

7.2.1 The Trust will involve disabled employees working at the schools, those working at other local schools or for the local authority. We will try to involve disabled staff through a local teacher union network, an e-forum, or meetings across a cluster of schools. The Trust will offer exit interviews to all staff who leave, disabled and non-disabled. Such interviews might provide useful information for the school's scheme and might also offer some insight into factors affecting disclosure.

7.3 Disabled Parents & Other Users of the School

7.3.1 The Trust will seek to involve disabled representatives, disabled parents or other disabled family members and non-disabled parents of disabled children, disabled members of the parent-teacher association, disabled volunteers at the schools, disabled members of the wider community such as local disability groups or disabled individuals using the schools beyond the school day.

7.4 Developing Involvement

7.4.1 The Trust recognises the importance of ensuring the involvement is real, and that the views of disabled students, staff and parents are reflected in their scheme in response to what they hear. To enable the scheme to be most effective it is anticipated it is likely that the school's first scheme will be developed in the light of the views that the school can hear more readily. Part of the action plan will focus on developing the involvement of disabled students, staff and parents over the three years of the scheme. This will enable the schools to learn what works and increase the involvement of disabled students, staff and parents over time.

ACTION PLAN

8.1 The Trust will set out the steps that need taking to meet the general duty. This will involve identifying our priorities and turning them into a series of

actions to ensure that the school makes progress on these priorities. These actions will be brought together in an action plan to accompany the scheme.

8.2 The action plan will be sufficiently explicit to enable the schools to judge whether or not our targets have been achieved. The Action plan will show:

- Clear allocation of lead responsibility
- Clear allocation of resources
- An indication of expected outcomes or performance criteria
- Clear timescales
- A specified date and process for review

8.3 The Trust will be able to achieve efficiencies of effort where, for example, we:

- Adopt a staged approach and plan developments over the three-year period of the scheme
- Dovetail actions arising from the scheme with actions arising from other school development priorities
- Undertake a review of the impact on disabled people of a school policy at the same time as the policy itself is due for review

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

9.1 As part of the Trusts self-evaluation the School Principal will assess the impact of the Disability Equality Scheme and revise it according to any information or issues which are identified.

9.2 The Disability Equality Scheme Plan outlines the steps the school will take to meet its responsibilities to help disabled persons access services and achieve more. The plan outlines the school's priorities, and outcomes the school aims to achieve.

Priority	Action Required	Success Criteria	Timescale	Responsible Person/s

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF DISABLED EMPLOYEES

10.1 New Staff

10.1.1 The Trust collects information on disability through the recruitment process. There is no requirement for an applicant to disclose a disability therefore the school will actively encourage the involvement and development of disabled staff. The primary reason for knowing who is disabled is so reasonable adjustments can be made.

10.2 Existing Staff

10.2.1 Disabled staff may not feel comfortable disclosing an impairment or health condition unless they know why the information is being requested, and what impact the information gathering is likely to have for them.

10.2.2 The Trust will actively try to encourage disclosure by promoting, understanding, involving and valuing staff with disabilities. This scheme will be a key tool for developing an inclusive and understanding culture in conjunction with other methods.

10.2.3 As information on staff improves, the Trust will analyse the information in respect of the representation of disabled staff:

- In all aspects of the work of the school, for example: teaching, teaching support, administrative support
- At all levels of seniority in the school

- Amongst those awarded Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments
- As permanent, temporary, full, part-time or casual members of staff
- In training and professional development opportunities
- In disciplinary and capability proceedings
- In harassment and bullying procedures
- As contract staff, for example: contract cleaners and agency supply teachers
- Among those who take sick leave
- Among trainee teachers on placement at the school
- Among those leaving the profession early

10.3 **RETAINING STAFF**

10.3.1 The Trust will seek to retain disabled staff who wish to continue working for us and gather information on the representation of disabled people within the school. This will be achieved by undertaking an analysis of whether the appropriate adjustments have been made and the appropriate support provided to enable disabled staff to return to work or continue in service where that is what the disabled member of staff wants to do.

10.3.2 Becoming a disability friendly place to work and having a diverse workforce is likely to be associated with improved retention, more reliable information and can bring wider benefits to the school, such as:

- A wider field for recruitment
- Retaining the experience and skills of employees who become disabled during their working life and avoiding the costs of recruiting and training new people
- Developing in-house expertise about what disabled staff and/or students may require
- Providing role models for children and young people

- Bringing different life experiences and new skills to the school
- Helping foster good relations with all employees by showing that everyone is valued and treated fairly

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF DISABLED PUPILS

11.1 The Trust will consider whether:

- There are areas of the curriculum to which disabled students have limited or no access. Some areas of the curriculum present particular challenges, for example: PE for students with a physical impairment, science and technology for students with a visual impairment, humanities for students with learning difficulties.
- Disability issues are reflected in the curriculum.
- Disabled students participate in extra-curricular activities. Some aspects of extra-curricular activities present particular challenges, for example: lunch and break times for students with social/interaction impairments, after-school clubs for students with physical impairments, school trips for students with medical needs.
- There are parts of the school to which disabled students have limited or no access at the moment, or whether physical features of the school environment hamper access to the whole life of the school.
- Different forms of communication are made available to enable all disabled students to express their views and to hear the views of others.
- Access to information is planned, with a range of different formats available for disabled students.
- Other issues affect the participation of disabled students, for example: bullying, peer relationships, policies on the administration of medicines, the provision of personal care, the presence or lack of role models or images of disabled people, in effect, all the school's policies and procedures, written and unwritten.

11.2 The school anticipate that careful consideration of these issues may indicate some clear priorities for the school's scheme

INFORMATION COLLECTING AND REPORTING

12.1 The Trust will collect information about parent/ carer disabilities to ensure adjustments are made to help the parent/ carer support their child. The school will:

- Ask about any disability or health condition in early communications with new parents and carers. It will be helpful if such communications emphasise the range of adjustments that can be made.
- For parents and carers of children already at the school, collect information on disability as part of a survey of parents' views, or in conjunction with a letter home about a parents' evening.

12.2 Reporting

12.2.1 The Trust will report on the scheme annually. We want to make clear both:

- What progress we have made in terms of implementing our action plan
- What has been the effect of what we have done

12.2.2 The Trust will need to revisit the information gathered at the start. This information along with the views of disabled students, staff and parents will help us to identify the progress we have made and the actions we may still need to take. This will be summarised in the annual report.

12.2.3 As with the scheme itself the report on the scheme will be made in a separate document or may be made within another document, for example: the school prospectus where the school is required to report on its accessibility plan. Where a school reports on its scheme in its prospectus, this should be in the form of a summary, with signposting to a full report elsewhere.

NATIONAL EQUALITY STANDARD (NES)

13.1 The National Equality Standard (NES) is a system for measuring development in policy and practice in equality and diversity. Our performance against the Standard is a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI).

13.2 The National Equality Standard will:

- Provide a systematic framework for the mainstreaming of diversity
- Help the school to meet their obligations under the law
- Integrate equality policies and objectives with Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment
- Encourage the development of anti-discrimination practice appropriate to local circumstances
- Provide a basis for tackling forms of institutionalised discrimination
- Over time, provide a framework for improving performance

13.3 An important feature of the National Equality Standard is the importance of diversity practice not just in employment but also as an essential aspect of delivering quality services to the whole school community. This approach is consistent with the relevant legislation and with the developing commitment to diversity and consultation under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

13.4 **Working with the National Equality Standard**

13.4.1 The National Equality Standard seeks to encourage a local response to local circumstances while securing an approach that will ensure continuous improvement in diversity practice.

13.4.2 To do this, the National Equality Standard places considerable emphasis on the establishment of key processes within the local authority.

13.4.3 This is set out in the Standard as five levels of achievement:

Level 1: Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy

Level 2: Assessment and Consultation

Level 3: Setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4: Information systems and monitoring against targets

Level 5: Achieving and reviewing outcomes

APPENDIX A

Disability Equality Duty – Action Plan for School

No	OBJECTIVE	HOW	WHY	WHO	WHEN
1	Disabled students to go on school trips without having to be accompanied by parents	Re-assess school trips policy and make necessary alterations	To help develop student independence	Teacher responsible for school trips	By next school trip
2	Ensuring disabled parents have every opportunity to be involved	<p>Creating a parking space for disabled to drop off & collect children</p> <p>Offer a telephone call to explain letters home for some parents who need this</p> <p>Adopt a more proactive approach to identifying the access requirements of disabled parents when their child starts at the school</p>	To ensure that disabled parents are not discriminated against and are encouraged to take interest and be involved in their child's education	Whole school workforce	With immediate effect to be constantly reviewed

Appendix A - Disability Equality Duty – Action Plan for School

3	To reduce the number of disability-related bullying incidents	Introduce buddy system and peer mentoring to all disabled students	Buddy systems and peer mentors will act as a supportive and preventative measure to school bullying	Teaching staff and students selected as buddies and peer mentors	To be implemented by new school year with results assessed end of school year
4	To promote the involvement of disabled students in classroom discussions/activities	<p>By developing our teaching and learning policy to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and teaching assistants give disabled pupils the opportunity to express their views; • Disabled pupils have any necessary support to participate in discussions; and • Teachers and teaching assistants show that they value the contribution of disabled pupils. 	Following a series of teaching observations that revealed that disabled pupils are not participating in class discussions as much as other pupils and to ensure that positive attitudes are promoted throughout.	Classroom Teachers and Teaching Assistants	With immediate effect

Appendix A - Disability Equality Duty – Action Plan for School

5	Encourage disabled staff/parents into joining the Local Advisory Board	One of the Representatives knows that the grandfather of one of the pupils is disabled. The Representative is delegated to ask the grandfather about the possibility of being co-opted onto the LAB	To encourage disabled people to get involved in public life and the school.	Local Advisory Board	With immediate affect
6	Ensure the school council includes disabled students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-opt two disabled pupils to the school council; • Provide a training programme for disabled pupils who might stand for election to the school council; and • Plan some additional coaching for disabled pupils who are potential candidates for the youth parliament 	To ensure that a diverse group of students are representing the student council, this will promote ideas and suggestions from a wider perspective, providing benefits for all.	Student council and staff	By first student council meeting of new academic yea

