Equality Statement and Objectives

Date of last review:	February 2026	Author:	Director of Standards and Performance
Date of next review:	February 2027	Owner:	Director of Operations and Director of Pastoral and Inclusion
Type of policy:	Network-wide	Approval:	Ark Schools Board
School:	N/A	Key Contact Name:	Jane Witheford
Key Contact Email:	governance.team@arkonline.org	Key Contact Phone:	0203 116 6333

Policy Statement

Ark Schools (the Trust) is committed to being an inclusive and equitable Trust, where every member of our community — staff, pupils, families, governors and partners — can belong. We believe that ensuring every child has access to an excellent education is a powerful way to tackle social inequality, and that our diversity makes us stronger, more effective and better able to serve our communities.

The Trust is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in line with the Equality Act 2010. We recognise that groups have suffered disadvantages because of their characteristics and we want to reduce disadvantages, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of our pupils, our workforce and the communities in which we work.

Our commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is central to our identity and purpose - to give every child, regardless of background, access to a great education and real choices in life. As such, we will assist our pupils in achieving their very best potential. Where pupils experience barriers to their success, we will work with them to address these. We will teach our pupils the importance of equality, what forms discrimination can take, and the impact discrimination can have. We will also encourage our pupils to make their own commitment to promoting equality.

This Equality Policy (the Policy) sets out how the Trust will meet both its moral commitment and statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 (and public-sector obligations), by embedding EDI across our organisation.

We will not discriminate on any of the grounds listed below (known as the protected characteristics). The protected characteristics that apply to schools are:

i. Age (in relation to staff only)
ii. Disability
iii. Gender re-assignment
iv. Marriage and civil partnership (in relation to staff only)
v. Pregnancy and Maternity
vi. Race
vii. Religion, Faith or Belief
viii. Sex
ix. Sexual orientation

See Appendix A for full definitions.

As an Academy Trust and an employer, we will also not accept any of the following:

i. Direct or Indirect Discrimination
ii. Harassment
iii. Victimisation

See Appendix B for full definitions of discrimination.

We are committed to complying with the **Public Sector Equality Duty** and will seek to:

i. Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act

ii. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

iii. Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

We will have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making decisions, taking actions and developing policies. We will publish our equality objectives and will provide information about how we meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Published Information will be updated annually, and objectives will be updated every four years. This information is available on our website.

Our schools publish their own equality objectives tailored to their community. These are available on each school's website.

Equality objectives 2026-2030 (Ark Schools Central)

1. Close gaps in achievement to ensure all pupils make excellent progress.

This will be achieved by promoting a culture and practices that ensure schools know pupils' starting points, set high expectations, and identify and remove barriers to learning; developing curriculum, teaching, and assessment approaches that secure excellent progress for all pupils; training our workforce to identify and remove barriers; and supporting schools to systematically review achievement and engagement data to close gaps and ensure equitable access.

---

2. Ensure all pupils thrive at school and are well prepared for their next steps, including by closing gaps in attendance, and advancing equality of opportunity and sense of belonging in our schools.

This will be achieved by promoting a culture in which staff and pupils value diversity and understand that difference is usual; supporting schools to raise attendance and close gaps for pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant and pupils with SEND; reducing suspensions and systematically reviewing behaviour data to ensure pupils with protected characteristics are not over-represented; developing inclusive curriculum pathways that provide all pupils with equitable access to routes that prepare them for their next steps; ensuring all pupils, particularly those at risk of underachievement or disengagement, receive high-quality information, advice and guidance that recognises the additional barriers some pupils may face, including those linked to protected characteristics or disadvantage; strengthening personal development curricula so pupils understand equality, tolerance, and protected characteristics; and deepening our work with families across all strands of our 10-year strategy.

---

3. Advance equality of opportunity for staff with protected characteristics by removing barriers to recruitment, development, and progression.

This will be achieved through improved workforce data and systems, inclusive recruitment practices, the development of equitable people processes across the employee lifecycle, increased diversity in leadership and governance, and the embedding of equality, diversity, and inclusion in induction and ongoing professional development.

Appendix A: Equality Act (2010) Definitions of Protected Characteristics

Age

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Gender Reassignment

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage and civil partnership means someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race

Race refers to a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnicity or national origins.

Religion, Faith or Belief

Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex

A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation

A person's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex (lesbians and gay men), towards people of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or towards people of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual).

Appendix B: Definitions of discrimination

1. Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and it may occur intentionally and unintentionally.
2. Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (details about protected characteristics are included in Appendix A).
3. Indirect discrimination occurs when someone is subjected to a provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination is a less obvious type of discrimination than direct discrimination and is usually unintentional.
4. Discrimination includes harassment which "is any form of unwanted physical (includes sexual), verbal or non-verbal conduct, speech or behaviour which makes someone feel distressed, humiliated or threatened and that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them." A single incident can amount to harassment.
5. Discrimination also includes victimisation which occurs when a person is subjected to a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.