

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Policy Reference:	A61
Version Number:	4
Applies to:	All services
Associated documents:	Policies including but not limited to: Recruitment Policy Safer working practices – incorporating code of conduct Dignity at Work Policy Employee Handbook Anti-bullying Policy Trans Policy - staff
Approved by:	The Inclusion and Equalities Working Party
Implementation date:	November 2024
Next review due by:	November 2025
<i>This policy has been reviewed to ensure it promotes safeguarding and does not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups</i>	

0. Summary of changes since previous version of policy

- Added associated document: Safer working practices – incorporating code of conduct and Dignity at Work

1. Aims

This policy sets out The Aurora Group's position, approach and commitment to equality and diversity. The Aurora Group is committed to creating and sustaining diverse and inclusive environments for our students, residents, employees, stakeholders and visitors. Our aim is to ensure that everyone is equally valued and respected and that our communities are representative of all members of society. We aim to eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

The Aurora Group aims to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by having due regard to the need to:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

We define diversity as valuing everyone as an individual. This is reflected within our values and behaviours:

- Caring
- Ambitious
- Collaborative
- Trusted
- Innovative

2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

[The Equality Act 2010](#), which introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty and protects people from discrimination.

[The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#)

This document is also based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance: [The Equality Act 2010 and schools](#).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of The Aurora Group (and any associated group of companies), the children and young people who attend or live at our settings, plus relatives, carers and all visitors.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Executive team will:

- Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this statement are published and communicated throughout our organisation and at our services, including to staff, students, residents, parents, and carers.

- › Ensure that the published equality information is updated at least every year, and that the objectives are reviewed and updated at least every 4 years.
- › Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the Service Leads
- › The Quality Assurance Director will be responsible for monitoring compliance with Independent School Standards and the inspection framework, and for providing feedback on this to the Board.
- › The People Director will be responsible for reporting on Equality and Diversity within the workplace to the Executive Team and the Board

The inclusion and equalities working party will:

- › Monitor the effectiveness and impact of the Aurora Group and Service's Equality Objectives and recommend improvements where needed.
- › Use the Aurora governance structures to ensure that inclusion issues are considered and addressed at the appropriate level.
- › Ensure that appropriate data is collected about HR processes and activity, and children and young people's outcomes in a way that supports aurora's statutory and regulatory roles.
- › Ensure that sufficient training programmes are in place to enable Aurora staff to fulfil their duties and responsibilities in relation to inclusion and equality.
- › Ensure that Aurora responds appropriately to changes in relevant legislation and guidance.
- › Report to the executive board on a termly basis

The Operations Director will:

- › Be responsible for ensuring the policy is followed consistently across their region.
- › Support the Service leads to create and monitor meaningful site-specific equality objectives.
- › Use the governance meetings to provide support and challenge to ensure the site is promoting equality and diversity.
- › Ensure they are familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document.
- › Attend appropriate equality and diversity training.
- › Report back to the Executive Team regarding any issues

The Service Lead will:

- › Create meaningful site-specific equality objectives.
- › Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives among staff, students, and residents.
- › Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to the Executive Team via governance reports and or meetings.
- › Maintain the service's three-year accessibility plan.

All staff: are expected to have regard to this document and to work to achieve the objectives as set out in their local site equality objectives document.

5. Definitions

The Equality Act 2010 sets out that the nine characteristics that are protected are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

6. Commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion

The Aurora Group is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among all people involved with Aurora (including children and young people who use our services, relatives, carers, its workforce and visitors) and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The Aurora Group is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and complies with non-discrimination provisions.

Where relevant, our policies include reference to the importance of avoiding discrimination and other prohibited conduct.

Staff are regularly reminded of their responsibilities under the Equality Act – for example, during meetings. Where this has been discussed during a meeting it is recorded in the meeting minutes.

New staff receive training on the Equality Act as part of their induction, and all staff receive refresher training every two years.

The Aurora Group has a designated working party for monitoring equality issues and equality is reported on at every governance meeting.

7. Intent

7.1. Aurora Employees

We intend to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether they are temporary, part-time or full-time.
- ensure we do not unlawfully discriminate because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010).
- oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes:
 - recruitment and selection
 - within pay and benefits
 - terms and conditions of employment

- dealing with grievances and discipline
- dismissal
- redundancy
- dependant's leave
- requests for flexible working
- selection for employment
- promotion
- training or other developmental opportunities

The Aurora Group commits to:

- Encourage equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
 - This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity, and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination.
 - All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with in line with the organisation's dignity at work policy and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
- Make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in this statement. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion statement, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

7.2 Children and Young People

We believe that everyone stands to benefit when we embrace and value the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities bring. It helps our students and residents to grow and learn, enables them to realise their potential, improves decision-making, boosts engagement and innovation, and enables us to better meet the needs of our diverse communities.

To this end, we have made the following commitments:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contribution of all our students and residents are recognised and valued.
- To not tolerate any form of unacceptable behaviour, harassment, discrimination, bullying (including cyber bullying) or victimisation in any area of learning communities or homes.
- To provide guidance and training to students and residents on diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- To encourage anyone who feels they have been subject to or witnessed discrimination to raise their concerns.
- To make every person aware of their personal responsibility for implementing and promoting equal opportunities in their day-to-day dealings with others.
- To regularly review all our day-to-day practices, policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of this statement.
- To monitor the effectiveness in promoting diversity and inclusion.
- We require all members of our community to recognise these commitments and act in accordance with them. In addition, we will comply with all relevant legislation and good practice.

8. Dealing with discrimination

8.1 Employees

Details of the organisation's dignity at work and disciplinary policies can be found on our intranet. This includes with whom an employee should raise a concern/grievance – usually their line manager.

Use of the organisation's dignity at work and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

8.2 Children and Young People

Unacceptable behaviour, harassment, discrimination, bullying (including cyber bullying) or victimisation of any individual is perceived as contradictory to our aspirations for a supportive working environment and will not be tolerated.

Our promoting positive behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy and local procedures outline how we will deal with issues of discrimination.

All children and young people we educate and care for should have access to facilities, equipment and the whole curriculum which positive reflects a wide range of diversity. They should also be involved in the development of equal opportunity initiatives and issues.

9. Advancing equality of opportunity

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, we aim to advance equality of opportunity by:

Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people that are connected to a particular characteristic they have (e.g., staff, children and young people with disabilities, or gay staff, children or young people who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)

Taking steps to meet the needs of people who have a particular characteristic (e.g., enabling Muslim staff, children and/or young people to pray at prescribed times)

Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (e.g., encouraging all children and/or young people to be involved in the full range of activities)

In fulfilling this aspect of the duty, our services will:

Publish attainment data each academic year showing how children and/or young people with different characteristics are performing.

The Aurora Group will:

Analyse the above data to determine strengths and areas for improvement, implement actions in response and publish this information.

Make evidence available identifying improvements for specific groups (e.g., declines in incidents of homophobic or transphobic bullying)

Publish further data about any issues associated with particular protected characteristics, identifying any issues which could affect our sites' children and/or young people.

10. Fostering good relations

The Aurora group aims to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it by:

Promoting tolerance, friendship and understanding of a range of religions and cultures through different aspects of our schools' and colleges' curriculum. This includes teaching in RE, citizenship and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English/reading, children and/or young people will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures.

Holding assemblies or group talks dealing with relevant issues. Children and/or young people will be encouraged to take a lead in such assemblies/activities, and we will also invite external speakers to contribute.

Working with our local communities. This includes inviting leaders of local faith groups to speak at assemblies/lessons, and organising trips and activities based around the local community.

Encouraging and implementing initiatives to deal with tensions between different groups of children and/or young people within the school/college/home. For example, ensuring our student/resident voice groups is formed of children and/or young people from a range of backgrounds and ages. All children and/or young people are encouraged to participate in organized activities, such as sports clubs. We also work with parents/carers to promote knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

We have developed links with people and groups who have specialist knowledge about particular characteristics, which helps inform and develop our approach.

11. Equality considerations in decision-making

The Aurora Group ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made.

The Aurora Group always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a trip or activity is being planned, sites consider whether the trip:

- Cuts across any religious holidays
- Is accessible to children and/or young people with disabilities.
- Has equivalent facilities for males and females.

12. Equality objectives

The Aurora Group has formally set Equalities objectives which are designed to support the organisation in establishing robust data from which we can set meaningful, challenging, yet realistic objectives. These objectives will be reviewed annually with the intention of creating a more targeted inclusion and equalities strategy. Each service will have a set of local equality objectives which will be monitored via the service's governance process. The Inclusion and Equalities Working Party will support the Group and its services to ensure that their objectives are meaningful, monitored and have impact.

13. Support, Advice and Communication

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the Inclusion and Equalities Working Party.

Support and advice regarding the policy will be provided by the HR Business Partner who is responsible for the region in which the enquirer is based. In the Central team, the ER Manager can be approached for support and advice. Service Leads can offer further information regarding site-specific objectives and initiatives.

14. Monitoring arrangements

The Inclusion and Equalities Working Party will review this policy on an annual basis.