

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

(Educational and Residential Settings)

1. Our Vision, Values and Aims for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

At Ambitious about Autism, our mission is to make the ordinary possible for autistic children and young people. Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything we do – we take a person-centred approach focused on individuals' quality of life. To realise our mission, we need to understand the diverse needs of autistic children and young people. We can only achieve this by ensuring that we are diverse and inclusive across all our work, from our governance and leadership to people, services, and wider influencing.

1.1 Our Vision

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) affects everybody. Its impact touches every part of our work, whether it is the young people, organisations, and supporters we work with, or our staff and volunteers. Only by recognising and valuing difference and treating everyone with dignity and respect, can we create a truly effective organisation, that has a positive impact on people's lives.

Our EDI vision is to become a place that embraces, enables, and champions equality, diversity, and inclusion. We want autistic children and young people, our staff, volunteers, supporters, in fact, anyone who encounters us to feel they belong and can bring their whole selves to Ambitious about Autism. Through our advocacy, we seek to have a positive impact on society.

This policy is a critical component of Ambitious about Autism's organisational strategy and has been co-produced in conversation with key stakeholders.

This policy's overarching goals are to develop:

1. **Courageous governance and leadership** – an organisation whose diverse governance and leadership demonstrably and actively lead on EDI.

Our governance and leadership will:

- Proactively and confidently embrace and lead the EDI agenda as a central part of our approach and plans;
- Become increasingly diverse and inclusive over time;
- Gather evidence to inform actions that will improve outcomes.

2. **An inclusive workplace** – where all our people feel a strong sense of belonging/can bring their whole selves to work.

Our workplace will have equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of what we do by:

- Developing a deep understanding of the profile, needs and views of all our people
- Ensuring leadership and management is driven by the principles of inclusion
- Having fair and consistent processes

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- Investing in staff development
 - Creating an environment that celebrates diversity.
3. **High quality and inclusive education**– reach and support diverse communities in a way that is enabling and appropriate to ambitions, interests, experiences and needs.

We will reach and support diverse communities in a way that is enabling and appropriate to their ambitions, interests, experiences and needs by:

- Ensuring that all plans, policies, systems, and processes for our services take a holistic approach to EDI;
 - Ensuring the curriculum and content within our services reflects the diverse histories, interests, and experiences of the communities we serve;
 - Working to ensure we promote our services and are accessible to diverse communities.
4. **Influential national work** – seek to make the ordinary possible for autistic children and young people from diverse communities.

Nationally, we will seek to make the ordinary possible for autistic children and young people from diverse communities by:

- Researching and highlighting the views, experiences and needs of the diverse communities we serve to help shape policy and practice nationally;
- Working in partnership to make change happen with and for autistic and children and young people impacted by multiple barriers;
- Ensuring our work is representative of and promoted to diverse communities.

1.2 Our Values

One of our core values is that 'we celebrate difference'. We strive to live by this value every day in all that we do, but we recognise it is time for us to up our game. We are ambitious in name, and this should include ambition in EDI. We must do and want to do much more. It is part of our core purpose to be an organisation that champions and supports diversity.

To achieve our vision of a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of autistic children and young people, we must be an organisation that values difference.

Our values and beliefs have informed what we aspire to in our EDI behavioural framework. Our policy and the procedures that follow will reinforce their importance:

1. Respect and value – the needs, challenges, responses, and opinions of others, embracing diversity and difference as they are what make us ambitious.
2. Feedback and trust – we are open to giving and receiving feedback and developing the culture of trust, so that everyone feels their voice is heard.
3. Accountability – we are all responsible for our actions and for making our workplace inclusive. We may not always get it right but, if this happens, we will take prompt action.

1.3 Our Aims

- Maintain and promote a working partnership between the school/college, parents and community which fosters respect, honesty, truth, co-operation, and tolerance.

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- Help children and young people understand the world in which they live, have mutual respect for the values of others and work together as a team.
- To ensure that everyone, whatever their needs and capabilities, is included, catered for and feels they belong.
- To value everyone and recognise and respond to the needs of all children and young people.

2. Defining Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

2.1 Equity

Equity is about fairness and equality of opportunity and advancing equality of opportunity involves treating people differently. People should not be treated the same. Some people may need extra help or adjustments to be part of the school community; this includes teachers, administration, cleaning, or catering staff employed at the school/college as well as Students/students, parents, and school governors.

Equal Opportunities ensures that our policies, procedures, and practice do not discriminate against the people within or associated with the organisation or individuals using its services. It is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of who they are, their background or their lifestyle.

Equality of Outcome ensures that our policies, procedures, and practices recognise that different individuals and groups face different barriers to achievement. Thus, where possible, we will ensure that we seek to re-dress imbalances by identifying, monitoring and, where necessary actively targeting under-represented employees and service users. We will do this through analysis of equality profile monitoring, and adaptations to our staff and honorary role recruitment processes.

Relating to the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) there are nine 'protected characteristics' these are:

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

This policy recognises the four types of unlawful behaviour regarding EDI:

- Direct discrimination;
- Indirect discrimination;
- Harassment;
- Victimisation.

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Under the general duty, schools must exercise 'due regard' in respect of the protected characteristics to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment;
2. Advance equality of opportunity;
3. Foster good relations between different groups.

2.2 Diversity

Diversity is about valuing people as individuals and learning from our differences. Our differences can be visible and non-visible. Promoting diversity, we can meet difference needs creatively to ensure opportunities are available to all and potential is fulfilled. Promoting a diversity friendly culture, we can meet our settings' aims and objectives more efficiently.

Culture is about the way we behave towards one another. Governors, all employees in the setting, parents, students, and the whole community. It is about how we treat one another and respect our differences. Promoting diversity and a diversity friendly culture helps to create a more productive community.

The social model of disability states that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for people with disabilities. When barriers are removed, people with disabilities can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

2.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is ensuring the right conditions are in place to harness each person's full potential. Inclusion is the action that is carried out because of the work done around understanding and promoting equality and diversity.

3. Purpose and Scope of the Policy

This policy sets out Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism School Trust's commitment to promoting EDI within our education settings.

We believe that it is our responsibility to promote equality and diversity wider than the nine characteristics (areas) covered by legislation. We work to remove barriers and we will not unfairly discriminate on any grounds.

We do this by extending our EDI strategy into the following areas of our educational settings:

- Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment;
- Behaviour;
- Admissions and Attendance;
- Environment;
- Staff Recruitment;
- Monitoring and Evaluation of our EDI strategy.

4. Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Our schools/college promote EDI through their curriculum by:

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- Promoting an inclusive curriculum that reflects the needs of all the students.
- Using materials that reflect the diversity of the school/college population, and local community in terms of race, gender, and disability, without stereotyping.
- Recognising and providing for the student through our highly differentiated curriculum as well as the use of appropriate methods in lessons.
- Displaying work from all students with achievements in any areas of the curriculum in and outside the school/college.
- Taking active steps to ensure that resources in all areas of the curriculum are inclusive ensuring equality and diversity are promoted and discrimination challenged in all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensuring all staff are skilled to engage and support students and challenge stereotypes.
- Using contextual data to monitor and improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of students.
- Taking account of the achievement of all students when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets.
- Ensuring all parents/carers are regularly informed of their son's/daughter's progress and achievement.
- Using contextual data to monitor the opinions of parents/carers on the quality of provision their son/daughter receives and how we may improve this.

5. Behaviour

Our Behaviour Policy outlines strategies and resources developed by the charity and trust to address the needs of all students and aims to develop students' ability to self-regulate and manage their own behaviour as much as possible.

As part of our commitment to EDI, our Student and Family Support Teams coordinate with relevant agencies to support parents/carers particularly those of our highly vulnerable students or those who themselves have learning difficulties or mental health issues.

6. Admissions and Attendance

Our schools/college are:

- Monitoring attendance of all students and using the data to develop strategies to identify, address and resolve any issues that might have an EDI focus
- Making reasonable provision for students and staff to authorise absence for religious observance.
- Monitoring the diversity of all referrals and not discriminate in any way.

7. Environment

Our Accessibility Policies for our schools outline our commitment to ensure access for all and physical resources are made available to allow full access to the curriculum as required and to meet the needs of all our students.

8. Staff Recruitment

We strive to ensure that individuals within our organisation reflect the wider community. We are particularly keen to ensure the views and voices of individuals with direct experience of autism are embedded at every level of the organisation. This means we will explicitly welcome applications from these individuals when seeking to recruit new staff or honorary

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roles. We will ensure that recruitment and promotion will be conducted based on merit and suitability for the role, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination.

Clear and accurate information on vacant posts should be available through advertisement, job descriptions, person specifications and interview. Vacancies should be advertised sufficiently widely to reach the widest possible range of candidates, either internal and/or external. We will explicitly state that we will use our best endeavours to make recruitment materials available in a range of formats where requested, to ensure our posts are accessible to a diverse range of applicants. We will also offer to make reasonable adjustments to the interview and application process for the same reason.

All recruitment material should not imply any preferred group, unless an occupational requirement exists limiting a post to a particular group.

Applicants will be informed, through all recruitment advertising of our commitment to equality and diversity and the existence of this policy.

Person specifications may include 'essential' requirements that are necessary and justifiable. Advice from the People Team where necessary, will be provided to ensure these are not discriminatory.

Individuals should be encouraged to discuss their development and training needs through a process of regular support and annual appraisals.

Job titles that are discriminatory should not be used.

9. Student's Voice

At all of our settings we will include the student's voice at the centre of our decision making. This shall inform our understanding of the diverse needs of autistic children and young people in order to improve our outcomes. We shall achieve this by engaging regularly with students through our student Council, annual parent and student surveys.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and reviewing of this policy will take place and will be made accessible through the school website or will be made available in an alternative format as requested.

We will regularly review the implementation of this Policy. Where evidence is found of ineffectiveness, remedial action will be taken.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 Governors

- The Governing Body has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this policy and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the school/college is fully inclusive to students, and responsive to their needs based on race, gender, and disability.
- The Governing Body seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for jobs at our school/college on grounds of race, gender, or disability.
- The Governors take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school/college environment gives access to people with disabilities and strive to make school communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers, and students.

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- The Governors welcome all applications to join the settings, whatever a student's socio-economic background, race, gender, or disability.
- The Governing Body ensures that no student is discriminated against whilst in our school/college on account of their race, sex, or disability.

11.2 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- It is SLT's role to implement the setting's EDI Policy and to ensure they are supported by the Governing Body in doing so.
- It is SLT's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the EDI Policy, and that staff apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- SLT ensures that all recruitment panels give due regard to this policy.
- SLT promotes the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school/college life.
- SLT treats all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness.

11.3 Staff

- Ensure that all children and young people are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and all staff will maintain awareness of this policy and our ambitious approach.
- Strive to provide material that gives positive images based on race, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypical images.
- Challenge any incidents of prejudice, racism, or homophobia, and record any serious incidents, drawing them to the attention of the head of school/college.
- To be models of equal opportunities through their words and action.
- To monitor annually the action Plan to see if all actions have taken place.

12. Other Relevant Policies

The policies listed below are either referred to or implied in this Policy. However, all our organisational policies are linked to equality and diversity.

- Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk
- Accessibility Plan
- Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Flexible Working
- Admissions
- Attendance
- Recruitment
- Behaviour
- Exclusions
- Recruitment and Selection
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders
- Induction
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Compliments and Complaints
- Grievance
- Dignity at Work
- Whistleblowing

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