

EQUALITY POLICY & TRUST EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

This policy is informed by the Christian values which are the basis for all of CDAT's work and any actions taken under this policy will reflect this.

'*Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right*'

Psalm 106:3

Approved by	Date	Review Schedule	Date of next review
Trust Board	March 2026 (policy)	Policy annually; Objectives every 4 years	Policy March 2027 Objectives December 2028

1. Introduction

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) is committed to having due regard to the Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a provider of education and an employer of staff, the Trust has due regard for the needs to:

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

Through policy and practice, CDAT aims to provide equal access and rights to all adults and pupils within its schools.

2. Beliefs

As a Church of England Multi Academy Trust, this policy is underpinned by the teachings of the Church of England: a Christian denomination which informs that every person is a child of God, individually unique yet made in his image and should receive his justice and righteousness. It is our duty to 'love our neighbour.'

These beliefs form the basis of how the CDAT has due regard to the Equality Act 2010.

It is everyone's right to:

- be regarded as being of equal worth and importance
- have the opportunity to fulfil their potential
- have an equal chance and to be valued and respected for who they are
- have equal access to all aspects of school life
- be free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation as defined below.

It is everyone's duty to behave in a way that enables the above to happen.

3. Protected characteristics

The Act defines protected characteristics as follows:

- race
- disability
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity
- age
- marriage and civil partnership

4. Unlawful behaviour

The Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation:

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a "provision, criterion or practice" is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic.

Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is "unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person".

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done ("a protected act") in connection with the Act.

5. Special provisions for disability

The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act. In particular, it works in only one direction, i.e. it protects disabled people but not people who are not disabled. This means that schools (including academies) are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so, by making reasonable adjustments to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities.

6. Exceptions for Church of England schools

CDAT is committed to having due regard to the Equality Act 2010. However, the Act includes some exceptions for schools with a designated religious character, such as the Church of England schools within CDAT.

Exceptions for pupils and prospective pupils

As a Church of England Multi Academy Trust:

- Priority may be given in admissions to members of the Church of England or another Christian denomination. This is dependent on the previous category of the school prior to conversion (e.g. if the school was previously Voluntary Controlled they may not discriminate in this manner). CDAT is committed to serving the children of each school's local area and will work with Local Governance Committees (LGCs) to develop criteria appropriate to the individual circumstances of the school.
- There are permitted exceptions on how education is provided to pupils and access is given to other aspects of school life which are not necessarily part of the curriculum. For example, organising visits for pupils to sites of particular interest to the Church of England school, such as a cathedral, is not discriminating unlawfully by not arranging trips to sites of significance to the faiths of other pupils. However, CDAT encourages its schools to provide visits to sites of other faiths as part of its Religious Education and wider curriculum.

These exceptions are to allow Church of England schools to conduct themselves in a way which is compatible with their religious ethos. But the Equality Act does not permit less favourable treatment of a pupil because they do not (or no longer) belong to the Church of England. Nor does it allow schools to discriminate on religious grounds in other respects, such as excluding a pupil or subjecting a pupil to any other detriment.

Exceptions for staff and prospective staff

CDAT schools that were Voluntary Controlled schools (but not sponsored by CDAT) prior to conversion to Academy status:

- may when, appointing a head teacher, take into account any candidate's suitability and ability to preserve and develop the religious character of the school
- may appoint reserved teachers when the number of teachers is more than two. Reserved teachers are selected according to their competence to teach RE according to the tenets of the school's religious character designation and are specifically appointed to do so. The number of reserved teachers must not exceed one-fifth of the teaching staff (including the headteacher)

- must not treat non-teaching staff and teachers, other than those appointed as reserved teachers, unfavourably in any way because of their religion.

CDAT schools that were Voluntary Aided schools prior to conversion to Academy status:

- may apply religious criteria when recruiting or dismissing any member of their teaching staff
- in considering dismissals, may have regard to any conduct that is incompatible with the precepts, or with the upholding of the tenets, of the religious character designation of the school
- may not apply any religious criteria to any other posts unless there is a genuine occupational requirement.

Exceptions at schools sponsored by CDAT will depend on the terms in their supplemental agreement.

7. Acts of worship

There is a general exception to the religion or belief provisions which allows all schools to have acts of worship or other forms of collective religious observance. This means the daily act of collective worship is not covered by the religion or belief provisions. CDAT schools are expected to provide a daily act of collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England.

8. Roles and responsibilities

The CDAT Board has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with equality legislation and the effective operation of this policy.

The Headteacher in each school is responsible for ensuring that:

- this policy is communicated and made readily available to staff, parents/guardians and visitors to the school
- this policy is implemented
- staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support
- appropriate action is taken in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

All staff are expected to actively work within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and promote equal opportunities, access and rights.

9. Equality Objectives

The Trust and each individual school are expected to set their own Equality Objectives, which should last for a specified period of four years.

CDAT, as a trust, has set the following Equality Objectives for the four-year period from December 2024 until December 2028:

- **To ensure that each CDAT school provides all of its pupils with a rich, broad and balanced curriculum which allows them to achieve well academically and prepares them for the next stage in their education while making sure that no child is disadvantaged because of their background or personal circumstances, including socio-economic context**
- **To monitor and analyse pupil achievement by race, sex, eligibility for Pupil Premium funding and SEND and act on any trends or patterns in the data that indicate additional support is needed by specific groups of pupils**
- **To ensure that staff related policies and procedures recognise the provisions within the Act and to make sure that CDAT offers equal opportunities to all staff.**

Each school within the trust will publish its own Equality Objectives, as agreed by the school's Local Governance Committee.