



# Public Sector Equality Duty Audit

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust

Review by: J Wilson

Reviewed: July 2024

*The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (The Trust) will adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by not discriminating against all stakeholders with which the organisation may be working with on the grounds of any protected characteristic.*

*Please refer to the Federation's Public Sector Duty audit for all actions and work relating to staff.*

**The Trust's Equality Objectives for 2021-2025 are:**

1. To cascade and embed ongoing equality and diversity training across the Trust, using our existing support frameworks to continue to improve understanding and to help eliminate discrimination.
2. To promote and monitor the involvement of all groups of students, and specifically those with protected characteristics, in the extra-curricular life of all the academies within the Trust.

**The context in which the Academy works:**

The Priory Federation of Academies structure includes three phases - Special, Primary and Secondary. In addition to our schools, the Trust continues to work with the wider educational community, including the delivery of teacher training and apprenticeship programmes.

**The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:**

1. Age\*
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership\*
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

\*These characteristics apply to the Trust as employers, but not in relation to our provision for students.

**What do we do in order to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between individuals who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?**

**Map to evidence/examples/records kept.**

- The HR team monitor any discrimination, harassment or victimisation incidents across the Trust and at the time of review there has been no recent reported incidents.
- Historical incident trackers demonstrate that due to the way in which the Trust manages any concerns about staff behaviour, reoffending does not occur at the time of the review.
- At the time of review, low levels of reported incidents of bullying, discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- At the time of the review, staff feedback identifies that the Trust takes any reports seriously and acts upon any concerns in a timely manner and in line with Trust Policy.
- The Trust policies identify a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Staff access these policies as part of their on-boarding, Induction and as/when these are updated.
- At the time of review, the Priory Profile identifies that the Trust's workforce is diverse given the context (geographical) in which recruitment takes place. The Profile shows a significant number of women in leadership positions. The Trust have a flexible working policy which all staff are eligible to apply.
- Monitoring of recruitment allows the Trust to review the profile of our workforce and shows a good level of diversity given the geographical context in which recruitment takes place.
- The recruitment process does not allow for any discrimination, candidates complete an equal opportunities monitoring form which is not shared with the shortlisting panel.
- When arranging interview days, disabilities that have been declared are considered. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that candidates are not at a disadvantage.
- Risk assessments and reasonable adjustments are put in place, if required, for any member of staff who is protected under a disability, whether mental or physical.
- The Trust has a number of policies in place to support staff who are caring for dependants who may have a disability, to ensure they can attend medical appointments.
- Absence procedures and policies allow for reasonable adjustments, risk assessments, occupational health, counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), referrals are made to support those defined with a disability.
- The Trust have trained at least one staff Mental Health First Aider at each Academy to promote and signpost emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- The Trust's Wellbeing group, which has a representative from all settings, has focused on educating leaders about mental health and how best to support staff who might be experiencing mental health problems. One of the initiatives of the group is the promotion of Mental Health Awareness Day.

Lincolnshire SCITT

- For applications to Lincolnshire SCITT, recruiters do not have access to any protected characteristics until after the offer of a place has been accepted.
- When interviewing candidates for Lincolnshire SCITT, a member of staff who is not on the interview panel asks the compulsory questions to avoid unconscious bias at interview.
- The Lincolnshire SCITT training programme for trainee teachers, includes training on protected characteristics and unconscious bias to ensure all children and young people have the same access to education.
- Key staff within the Lincolnshire SCITT have also undertaken Mental First Aider training.

### Priory Apprenticeships

- Staff recruited to work for Priory Apprenticeships are employed by the Trust, therefore the above points apply. Where staff working for Priory Apprenticeships who are not employed by the Trust, for example under a secondment agreement, the process does not allow for any discrimination. Full recruitment checks are undertaken and the Trusts overarching policies extended to those who are not employed.
- Key staff within the Priory Apprenticeships have undertaken Mental First Aider training.
- For apprentices based outside of Trust sites risk assessments and reasonable adjustments are put in place, if required, for any apprentices who are protected under a disability, whether mental or physical.
- When arranging interview days for apprentices, disabilities that have been declared are considered. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that candidates are not at a disadvantage.

### **What do we do to engage with the protected groups in order to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations? Map to evidence/records kept.**

- The Trust has an embedded Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group which includes a Development Strategy.
- HR hold fortnightly HR clinics at each Academy site, offering opportunity for staff members to discuss any concerns. This creates an open culture in which staff are encouraged to speak out if they have any queries, concerns or problems. As a result of the clinics the Trust have put together specialist workshops for staff on topics such as pensions and preparing for retirement. The HR Team meet with staff who have protected characteristics to discuss their experience of working with the Trust and to identify any areas for improvement. This information is recorded via the iTrent system and analysed by the Equality and Diversity Working Group.
- The Wellbeing Group meets with staff from each academy and their feedback drives the initiatives which are put into place, e.g. training on mental health for leaders.
- The Trust conducts an annual staff survey, which includes questions on mental health and wellbeing and allows employees the opportunity to comment on any concerns.
- Absence procedures, more specifically, the return to work meeting, allows engagement with those who are in the protected groups, as it provides them with an opportunity to discuss the reasons for the absence. This allows the Trust to make reasonable adjustments, if required, to allow the employee to return to work with the same opportunities. It also provides them with a safe space to discuss any concerns they might have.
- Specialist support is provided to staff with mental and physical disabilities, including but not restricted to risk assessments, workstation equipment, counselling, CBT, Occupational Health referrals.
- The Trust has worked on implementing a new process which is designed to support individuals as they depart for maternity leave and as they return to work.
- This initiative is a result of working with individuals who had recently been on maternity and seeking their views on what worked/what did not work. This initiative is proving successful.
- The HR Team undertake extensive training to be able to best support individuals in the workplace.
- Professional coaching is available for all staff regardless of any protected characteristics.

**How effective are we at eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations?**

**Map to evidence/records kept.**

- At the point of review all case/incident reviews statistically show little or no cases of bullying/harassment with staff, with no evidence of reoffending where incidents have historically occurred. A full 'lessons learned' process has been implemented successfully.
- Staff feedback identifies that the Trust takes any report seriously and acts upon any concerns in a timely manner.
- The HR Clinics have created an open culture, which staff have embraced.
- Through early intervention, the HR clinics have prevented situations escalating and staff feel better supported and listened to.
- Any promoted posts across the Trust are appointed based on merit, not based on a protected characteristic. As a result of this, the Trust has a reasonable element of diversity in management roles (and promoted posts) considering the context in which it recruits.
- The recent staff survey showed a high percentage of staff feel valued at work and enjoy their work. Staff feel respected by their colleagues and leaders and feel able to raise concerns if they have any.
- The survey also showed that staff believe the Trust have embedded equality across the Trust and that they are willing to ask for help when they need it.

**Next Steps:**

- To monitor and evaluate the EDI statistics and create initiatives based on the results.