

BALLYMENA ACADEMY

EQUALITY & INCLUSION POLICY

(Updated April 2025)

Purpose

This policy sets out our commitment and approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Policy is based on guidance provided by the Education Authority.

1. Introduction

Ballymena Academy is committed to equality and inclusion.

We recognise the value of diverse environments and strive to promote a culture in which all pupils, staff and members of the school community are welcomed and supported to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background or personal characteristics.

We are committed to an ethos and culture of inclusion in our School for all pupils, irrespective of race, religion/belief, political views, disability, SEN status, gender, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Ballymena Academy is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of all our young people and where all members of our school community are of equal worth. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength that enriches our lives. We take account of differences and strive to remove any barriers to learning and development.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and bullying and harassment. As a school community, we recognise the need to champion equality and ensure inclusion for all pupils in the full life of our school; where appropriate making necessary adjustments to enable everyone's participation.

Ballymena Academy believes that education (both formal and informal learning) is fundamental to equality of opportunity. It prepares young people for life and is a powerful influence on access to and advancement in employment. All young people should be able to learn and develop fully in a truly diverse and inclusive environment.

All our policies and practices are fully inclusive and supportive of a welcoming culture for all communities; this is evidenced in our practices and procedures.

2. Mission and Values

The school motto is **Tenax Propositi** ('steadfast of purpose'). That core purpose has been interpreted in the mission statement as: **Ballymena Academy Cares for the Individual and Inspires Learning and Achievement**, and these key features of the ethos are explained as:

- **Caring:** the caring ethos is evident in the positive staff-pupil relationships and in the way in which the young people relate to their school. It underpins the effort to make the school to parents as well and is central to the commitment to the security and safety of pupils, staff and visitors, and to the supportive pastoral care structures. The school encourages and enables pupils' participation in organisations, campaigns and causes which: improve the lives of others/are to approved charities/promote respect for others
- **Individual:** each pupil is valued and respected as an individual and known to a team of staff including her or his subject teachers. In turn, each pupil is required to show respect to others, staff and pupils alike, and to the authority and property of the school

- Inspiring: Pupils' relationships with their teachers and with the school itself are key here as is the alongside the well-qualified and professional teaching staff and the team of support staff delivering a high quality service to facilitate high-quality learning and teaching, pupils benefit from a clean, secure and well-equipped learning environment and high expectations are held for each one of them.
- Learning: is broadly viewed and includes all aspects of the extensive educational service which is provided by this school, in and out of the classroom, during and beyond the school day. The curriculum is kept under review and the young people are prepared for higher education and for adult and working life characterised by continuous change
- Achievement: in keeping with the broad perspective, the school seeks to motivate and enable young people to achieve excellence across all activities in which they are involved; this includes public examinations and embraces all aspects of the co-curricular programme.

Evaluation of the appropriateness of this ethos, as well as the extent to which it is realised for and by pupils, and determining the need for improvement in aspects of the school's performance, is carried out by independent and school-generated surveys -factual and attitudinal, formal and informal- of various school audiences and by data analysis. The information gathered in this process is a substantive component of the evidence through which the SDP evolves year on year, the basis on which new plans are formulated, and the context in which the school carries out thorough self-evaluation.

3. Equality and Inclusion – School Policies

Through this policy, and the wider practices within Ballymena Academy , we seek to empower our young people to embrace diversity and challenge discrimination. We equip our Governors and staff to fulfil their legal responsibilities, ensure that our school's safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and inclusive and enable robust monitoring of our progress as a school.

Inclusion underpins all our school policies.

It is our belief that equality and inclusion is central to **all** of our policies and that we maintain an ethos that welcomes diversity and promotes equal opportunities for all, ensuring all our pupils and their families feel valued and supported and making sure that equality and inclusion is evident in everyday school life.

Relevant documents include:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use, eSafety Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Admissions Policy/Criteria
- RSE Policy
- SEN Policy
- Pastoral Calendar/ Assembly Themes
- School Development Plan
- Careers Education, Information and Guidance Policy

4. Responsibilities

The **Board of Governors** has overall responsibility to:

‘Promote equality, good relations and diversity and to comply with education and employment legislation and anti-discrimination, human rights and equality legislation that affect its statutory duties in relation to the school’ *‘Every school a good school – the governors role’* (Department of Education NI, August 2019)

The Governors have overall responsibility to manage the implementation of equality and diversity in our school.

The **Principal** is responsible for:

- ensuring policies and procedures are in place to comply with equality legislation;
- ensuring the school implements policies and practices in line with the principles of equality and inclusion;
- following the relevant procedures and taking action in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- ensuring appropriate training and awareness-raising is undertaken with staff;
- ensuring that appropriate records are kept of any cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying.

The **Senior Leadership Team** is responsible for:

- putting the school’s equality and inclusion policies and codes into practice;
- making sure that all staff know their responsibilities and receive the support and training necessary to carry them out;
- following the relevant procedures and taking action where necessary.

The School’s Pastoral Care Team and Safeguarding Team (led by the Designated Teacher) will manage the implementation of this policy, in partnership with the Principal.

All School Staff (*teaching and support*) have a responsibility for the day to day operation of this policy and will contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment within the school.

Pupils/students are responsible for:

- respecting others in their language and actions;
- following all of the relevant school policies and codes of conduct in line with the principles of equality and inclusion.

5. Promotion of Equality and Inclusion

Ballymena Academy promotes equality and inclusion within our school in the following ways – (this list is not exhaustive):

School Practices

- Development of a whole school approach;
- An inclusive mission statement;
- Use of a range of resources and teaching approaches;
- Use of appropriate terminology and language;
- Tackling stereotypes;
- Challenging bullying behaviour, in whatever form it takes;

- Increased visibility/role modelling of minority groups;
- Clear expectations regarding acceptable behaviour;
- Regular consultation with pupils on uniform.
- Have regular training for all staff.

Facilities/ Services

- Promoting and using, interpreting services, where required ;
- Using translated documents, where required;
- Have allocated accessible parking;
- Having accessible toilets;
- Having an accessible main entrance building;
- Considering flexible payment schemes when planning trips and extra-curricular activities;
- Helping young people to access advice from support organisations including notice boards with clear and accessible information and contacts.

Curriculum

- Examining where and when themes around equality and inclusion might be embedded into topics within each curriculum area;
- Participating in collaborative projects with partner schools;
- Reinforcing positive messages in whole school and year group assemblies;
- Promotion of equality and inclusion through the Personal Development programme.

6. Monitoring the Success of the Equality and Inclusion Policy

The policy will be monitored via a range of methods:

- Analysis of the number and type of bullying incidents, and other incidences of unacceptable behaviour, by equality characteristic with appropriate action taken as necessary;
- Monitoring of effectiveness of equality and inclusion across curriculum areas;
- Monitoring and analysis of comments and complaints in relation to equality and inclusion;
- Record kept of training/information presented to staff/pupils;
- Highlighting of positive stories on equality and inclusion;
- Regular feedback sought from pupils, staff, parents/guardians and the wider community.

7. Complaints Procedures

The school has a robust and transparent Complaints Policy & Procedure. If a complaint is made regarding equality or inclusion, the complaints process will be fairly and systematically applied. Access to the Complaints Policy & Procedure can be found on the school's website.

8. Review cycle of policy

The Equality and Inclusion Policy will be reviewed by all stakeholders (involving consultation with Governors, staff, pupils and parents) and, if required, updated every *three* years in line with our school policy review cycle.