



THE ORCHARD SCHOOL

Equalities Scheme (Policy)

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Ratified: December 2025

Review: December 2026

Chair of Governors:

Headteacher:

Ethos of The Orchard School

At The Orchard School, Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that every child has the potential to grow, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right environment, relationships, and support. The Orchard Way guides everything we do, ensuring that our approach is therapeutic, inclusive, and centred on understanding behaviour as communication. We are committed to nurturing the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of our pupils, recognising their unique challenges while celebrating their individuality. Through strong relationships and a culture of care, we create a school where every pupil feels safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Principles of Our Ethos:

1. **Respect for the Individual:** Every pupil deserves respect, dignity, and the opportunity to be heard.
2. **Relationships at the Heart of Learning:** Positive, trusting relationships form the foundation of our work.
3. **Equity and Inclusion:** We ensure all pupils have access to the support they need to succeed.
4. **Therapeutic and Nurturing Approaches:** We integrate therapeutic strategies to promote resilience.
5. **High Expectations with Compassion:** Balancing aspirations with understanding and personalisation.
6. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Families, carers, and agencies work together to support pupils.
7. **A Safe and Predictable Environment:** Structure and boundaries foster trust and confidence.
8. **Restorative Practices:** Addressing conflicts through understanding, accountability, and growth.

Mission Statement

At The Orchard School, Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that every child has the potential to grow, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right environment, relationships, and support. The Orchard Way guides everything we do, ensuring that our approach is therapeutic, inclusive, and centred on understanding behaviour as communication. We are committed to nurturing the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of our pupils, recognising their unique challenges while celebrating their individuality. Through strong relationships and a culture of care, we create a school where every pupil feels safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential.

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This Equality Scheme sets out how The Orchard School fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and supports all members of our community to feel safe, valued and included.

1.2 It applies to:

- pupils (Years 2–11)
- staff
- governors
- parents and carers
- contractors, agency staff and visitors

1.3 The scheme brings together and replaces previous stand-alone Equal Opportunities and Race Equality policies. It provides a single, coherent framework that:

- aligns with our SEMH context and The Orchard Way
- embeds Therapeutic Thinking (TT) as our core behaviour and relational framework
- supports implementation of our Mission, Vision and Values (MVV)
- reflects Ofsted expectations and statutory duties

2. Our Equality Vision and Values

2.1 At The Orchard School, equality is about equity, dignity and belonging. We recognise that many of our pupils have experienced adversity, exclusion or discrimination. Our role is to offer a safe, structured and relational environment where they can rebuild trust and succeed.

2.2 Our MVV and values underpin our approach to equality:

- Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares
- Trust
- Belonging
- Aspiration
- Voice
- Pride
- Curiosity

2.3 In practice this means we will:

- treat every member of the community with dignity and respect

- actively remove barriers that prevent pupils from accessing learning and wider school life
- challenge prejudice, discrimination, harassment and victimisation in all forms
- create visible representation of diversity across the curriculum and environment
- use Therapeutic Thinking principles to understand behaviour as communication and to plan protective and educational responses

3. Legal Framework and Protected Characteristics

3.1 This Equality Scheme is informed by:

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- Children and Families Act 2014 (including EHCP duties)
- SEND Code of Practice
- Relevant DfE guidance and the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework

3.2 We will have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.3 We recognise the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

3.4 We also pay particular attention to other forms of vulnerability and disadvantage that affect our pupils, including:

- SEMH needs
- experience of trauma or ACEs
- looked-after and previously looked-after status
- socio-economic disadvantage
- young carers
- attendance and exclusion risk

4. Equality in The Orchard School Context (SEMH and TT)

4.1 As a cross-phase SEMH special school, we recognise that:

- pupils may have entrenched negative experiences of education and authority
- identity-based bullying and discrimination can significantly impact mental health and self-worth
- inconsistent responses to behaviour can reinforce feelings of rejection and shame

4.2 We therefore:

- use Therapeutic Thinking to frame behaviour as unmet need or unskilfulness, not “badness”
- plan protective and educational consequences, not punitive responses
- maintain high expectations for learning, conduct and relationships, while understanding individual need
- prioritise emotionally safe, predictable routines and structures
- value pupil voice and co-produce strategies wherever possible

5. Aims of the Equality Scheme

We aim to:

5.1 Articulate a clear, shared commitment to equality, inclusion and belonging across the school.

5.2 Ensure all pupils, regardless of background or need, can:

- access the curriculum and wider school life
- develop a positive sense of identity and self-worth
- feel physically and emotionally safe
- make good progress from their starting points

5.3 Ensure all staff and governors:

- understand their legal duties and professional responsibilities
- model inclusive, respectful practice
- receive appropriate training to fulfil their roles

5.4 Ensure our policies, procedures and environment:

- actively remove barriers
- avoid bias, stereotyping or discriminatory impact
- are monitored and reviewed in light of equality considerations

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

1. Ensure the school complies with equality legislation.
2. Ratify and review this Equality Scheme and associated objectives.
3. Receive and challenge reports on:
 - pupil outcomes for different groups
 - attendance, exclusions and behaviour patterns
 - prejudice-related incidents
4. Consider equality impact when making strategic decisions.

6.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

1. Provide strategic leadership on equality, inclusion and Therapeutic Thinking.
2. Ensure that policies, systems and culture reflect our equality duties.
3. Allocate responsibilities and resources to implement the scheme.
4. Ensure equality considerations are embedded within the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

6.3 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

SLT will:

1. Monitor equality within their areas (curriculum, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, SEND, staffing).
2. Ensure staff receive training and guidance on inclusive and TT-based practice.
3. Oversee data analysis for different pupil groups and respond where gaps or concerns emerge.
4. Ensure prejudice-related incidents are responded to, recorded and reviewed.

6.4 SENDCo

The SENDCo will:

1. Lead on accessibility and reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND and disabilities.
2. Ensure EHCP outcomes and provision support equality of access and opportunity.
3. Work with staff, parents and external agencies to remove barriers to participation.

6.5 Community Support Team

Community Support staff will:

1. Support staff in applying TT principles consistently.
2. Monitor patterns of behaviour and incidents across groups.
3. Contribute to and review plans for pupils at higher levels of need or risk.

6.6 Staff

All staff will:

1. Maintain high expectations for every pupil.
2. Model inclusive language, behaviour and attitudes.
3. Plan lessons and interactions that promote equality and respect.
4. Challenge discrimination, prejudice and derogatory language.
5. Record and report incidents of concern in line with school procedures.

6.7 Pupils

Where appropriate, pupils will:

1. Treat each other and staff with respect.
2. Value difference and challenge unkindness and prejudice.
3. Share their views about how safe and included they feel.

6.8 Parents, Carers and Visitors

Parents, carers and visitors are expected to:

1. Support the school's values and Equality Scheme.
2. Treat all members of the community with respect.

3. Raise concerns promptly and appropriately with staff.

7. Eliminating Discrimination and Advancing Equality

7.1 Curriculum and Teaching

We will:

- provide a broad, balanced and needs-led curriculum for all pupils
- ensure representation of diverse identities, cultures and families across subjects
- challenge stereotypes and bias in materials, language and examples
- build explicit teaching around respect, kindness and inclusion into our Personal Development curriculum
- use TT-informed strategies to teach social and emotional skills and restore relationships after incidents

7.2 Access to Learning and Participation

We will:

- make reasonable adjustments to enable access (timetabling, environment, resources, regulation needs)
- provide appropriate support, adaptations and therapies in line with EHCPs and assessed need
- avoid unnecessary withdrawal from key curriculum experiences
- ensure all pupils have opportunities to participate in enrichment, visits and leadership roles where safe and appropriate

7.3 Environment and Resources

We will:

- create displays and shared spaces that reflect our diverse community
- avoid stereotypical or biased content in visuals and resources
- ensure signage and communication are clear, accessible and welcoming

7.4 Staff Recruitment, Development and Retention

We will:

- comply with equality legislation in recruitment, selection and employment
- make decisions based on merit, skills and role requirements
- monitor the workforce profile and consider equality when planning recruitment and development
- provide training relating to equality, inclusion, SEMH and Therapeutic Thinking

8. Tackling Racism and Other Prejudice-Related Incidents

8.1 Definitions

A prejudice-related incident is any incident which is perceived to be motivated by or linked to direct harm to an individual based on one or more of the protected characteristics, including but not limited to:

- racist incidents
- homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incidents
- sexist, misogynistic or sexual harassment incidents
- incidents based on disability, religion or belief

8.2 Principles

We will:

1. Treat all prejudice-related incidents as serious.
2. Respond promptly using Therapeutic Thinking principles.
3. Support the pupil(s) harmed.
4. Educate and hold to account the pupil(s) whose behaviour caused harm.
5. Record and monitor incidents to identify patterns and inform prevention.

8.3 Procedures

When a prejudice-related incident occurs:

1. The adult present intervenes immediately to stop the behaviour and ensure safety.
2. The incident is reported to the appropriate member of staff (e.g. Pupil Support, class teacher, SLT).
3. The incident is recorded on our safeguarding systems as a prejudice-related incident.
4. The pupil(s) harmed are listened to, believed and supported.
5. Restorative and educational work is planned in line with TT principles.
6. Parents/carers are informed where appropriate.
7. Serious or repeated incidents may result in additional protective measures and, if necessary, formal behaviour responses in line with our Relational and Therapeutic Behaviour Policy.

8.4 Monitoring and Reporting

We will:

- review incidents regularly to identify patterns and vulnerable groups
- report anonymised data to governors at least annually
- use findings to inform staff training, curriculum adjustments and targeted work

9. Community Cohesion and Pupil Voice

9.1 We are committed to building a sense of belonging and shared responsibility across The Orchard School community.

9.2 We will:

- provide curriculum opportunities that explore diversity, rights, responsibilities and community
- promote shared values and respect through assemblies, tutor time and daily routines
- encourage pupils to contribute through School Council or equivalent forums
- involve pupils in reviewing how safe and included they feel and in shaping improvements

10. Accessibility and SEND

10.1 We recognise our duties to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
- improve the physical environment to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education and facilities
- improve the availability of accessible information

10.2 We will:

- maintain and implement an Accessibility Plan, reviewed regularly by SLT and governors
- ensure reasonable adjustments are identified and implemented for pupils, staff and visitors
- consider physical, sensory, communication and regulation needs when planning environment changes and curriculum models
- provide information in accessible formats where reasonably practicable (plain English, visuals, interpreters, digital formats etc.)

11. Engagement and Consultation

11.1 We recognise that our Equality Scheme is strongest when it is informed by the experiences and views of our community.

11.2 We will:

- work with parents and carers through meetings, reviews, surveys and informal feedback
- use pupil voice activities, including School Council, small-group discussions and individual feedback
- involve staff in reviewing policies and practice, including equality considerations
- share the Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives via our website and offer paper copies on request

12. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

12.1 The effectiveness of this Equality Scheme will be monitored through:

- ongoing school self-evaluation
- analysis of pupil progress, behaviour, attendance and exclusions for different groups
- monitoring of prejudice-related incidents
- staff surveys and HR information (where appropriate)
- feedback from pupils, parents and external partners

12.2 Governors will receive an annual report summarising:

- progress towards Equality Objectives
- patterns and responses around prejudice-related incidents
- any significant equality-related issues and actions taken

12.3 This Equality Scheme will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or school context.

13. Equality Objectives 2025–2028

The following draft Equality Objectives will be refined annually and linked explicitly to the School Improvement Plan:

13.1 Curriculum and Achievement

- To ensure that all curriculum pathways are sequenced and adapted so that pupils with SEMH and SEND needs can access, engage with and achieve well in line with their starting points.

13.2 Behaviour, Safety and Belonging

- To reduce incidents of prejudice-related language and behaviour through proactive teaching, restorative approaches and consistent use of Therapeutic Thinking, with a particular focus on racism, homophobia, sexism and ableism.

13.3 Attendance and Engagement

- To improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including pupils with social care involvement and those with higher levels of SEMH need.

13.4 Pupil Voice and Representation

- To increase opportunities for pupils from a range of backgrounds and needs to participate in leadership roles and pupil voice activities, ensuring their experiences shape school improvement.

13.5 Staff Development and Confidence

- To strengthen staff confidence and skill in delivering inclusive, representative curriculum content and in challenging discrimination and prejudice-related incidents, as evidenced through training evaluations and monitoring.

Progress towards these objectives will be:

- monitored by SLT
- reported annually to governors

14. Linked Policies and Documents

This Equality Scheme should be read alongside:

- Relational and Therapeutic Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying (including Prejudice-Based Bullying) guidance
- SEND Information Report
- Accessibility Plan
- Attendance Policy
- PSHE / Personal Development curriculum documentation
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Safer Recruitment and HR policies (as appropriate)

The Orchard School – Equality Scheme Summary and Action Plan

Summary Statement

This Equality Scheme sets out how The Orchard School meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and ensures every member of the community feels safe, valued and

included. It aligns with our SEMH context, Therapeutic Thinking approach and Mission, Vision and Values. The scheme provides a clear framework for eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations across the school.

Equality Objectives 2025–2028

Curriculum and Achievement: Ensure all curriculum pathways are sequenced and adapted so pupils with SEMH and SEND needs can access, engage with and achieve well.

Behaviour, Safety and Belonging: Reduce prejudice-related language and incidents through proactive teaching, restorative practice and consistent use of Therapeutic Thinking.

Attendance and Engagement: Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Pupil Voice and Representation: Increase opportunities for all pupils to contribute to leadership and decision-making, ensuring diverse voices shape school improvement.

Staff Development and Confidence: Strengthen staff knowledge and confidence in delivering inclusive curriculum content and challenging discriminatory behaviour.

Equality Action Plan (Summary)

Objective	Actions	Monitoring
Curriculum & Achievement	Review and adapt curriculum models; monitor progress for key groups.	SLT three times per year; governors annually
Behaviour & Safety	Analyse incident patterns; implement TT training and restorative approaches.	Community Support & SLT termly
Attendance	Targeted support for PA pupils; family engagement strategies.	Attendance Lead termly
Pupil Voice	Strengthen School Council; increase representation from all groups.	FLO termly
Staff Development	Deliver equality and TT CPD; audit staff confidence and practice.	SLT annually