CYFLAWNI TEGWCH A RHAGORIAETH
MEWN ADDYSG A GWELL LLES I BAWB

EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
AND ENHANCED WELLBEING FOR ALL

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

Education and Inclusion Services Directorate



STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

Guidance and Model Plan for Schools

September 2022

This document is available in Welsh

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Section 1: Introduction

The Council and all of its schools are required to meet its commitment to equality and account for how the legal obligations outlined within the Equality Act (2010) are met. The Equality Act (2010) provides protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation of individuals who have one of the protected characteristics as set out in the 2010 Act.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. These are called **protected characteristics.**

Section 2: Requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duties

The Equality Act 2010 brought together and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws into a single Act and introduced a new general duty on the Council when making decisions and delivering services to have due regard how to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

To fulfil the three aims of the general duty outlined in the Act, schools have three sets of specific duties:

- To collect, analyse and publish information about their progress in achieving the three aims of the 2010 Act;
- To decide on certain specific and measurable objectives that they will pursue over the coming years to achieve the three aims and publish these objectives;

And when undertaking the first two sets of specific duties:

- To engage with people who have a legitimate interest – including all staff, all parents/carers and learners, and local groups, organisations and individuals as appropriate.

The Public Sector Equality Duty came in to force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010) and requires schools to take action to improve outcomes for learners with different protected characteristics. It is a legal requirement, under the 2010 Act, which schools in Wales must follow.

The ultimate aim of the Act is to ensure that public bodies and schools consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day to day activities. In essence, it aims to remove or minimise any disadvantage experienced by individuals due to their protected characteristics and ensures that appropriate actions are taken to overcome any barriers, particularly if participation in aspects of public or school life is disproportionately low. It also aims to develop positive relations by tackling prejudice and discrimination, and by promoting understanding between individuals who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Meeting the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as long as that does not contravene other provisions within the Act.

Section 3: Integrating Equality into other Statutory and Non-Statutory Policies

The commitment to equality should underpin all school policies, processes and procedures. There are a number of key statutory and non-statutory policies that strongly reflect the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and where there should be significant alignment with the Strategic Equality Policy and Plan. These include the: Pupil Discipline/Anti-Bullying Policy; SEN/ALN Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Curriculum Policy; and the Complaints Policy to name just a few.

All governing bodies and school leaders must pay due regard to statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government to governing bodies in maintained schools on Rights, Respect, Equality. There is also a requirement for all schools to record, monitor and report on all bullying and racial incidents to the local authority

Further information can be found at
Rights, respect, equality: guidance for schools | GOV.WALES
AntiBullyingPolicy.pdf (rctcbc.gov.uk)

Section 4: Aims of the Strategic Equality Plan

All schools are required to have a detailed Strategic Equality Plan to ensure that the legal requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales are met.

The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan is to fulfil the duties to provide equality for individuals with protected characteristics and to ensure that fairness and equality is at the heart of everything we do at all levels within our schools and communities.

Section 5: Roles and Responsibilities

GOVERNING BODIES

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty there are also specific duties on school governing bodies to enable better performance of the general duty.

School governing bodies **must:**

- Publish the school's four year strategic plan and relevant Equality Objectives and review them within four years;
- Publish a statement which sets out the steps it has taken or intends to take in order to achieve each Equality Objective and compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duties and Equality Act (2010);
- Make appropriate arrangements to monitor its progress and effectiveness;
- When planning Equality Objectives, give due regard to relevant information that it holds and seek the involvement of those persons that it considers represents the interests of persons who share one or more of the protected characteristics.

All schools must have a current Strategic Equality Plan in place and this is a statutory requirement.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Senior Leaders in schools must ensure that they actively promote equality and eliminate discrimination by:

- Implementing the school's Strategic Equality Plan, supported by the governing body in doing so;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Act and are fully informed of our school's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives;
- Ensuring that all appointments' panels give due regard to the Strategic Equality Plan, so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities;
- Promoting the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum, and promoting respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life;
- Treating all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, according to the local authority and school policies; and
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the Strategic Equality Plan.

TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

All members of the school staff must contribute to ensuring that their school is a fair, just and cohesive community by:

- Ensuring that all learners are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the school's Strategic Equality Plan;
- Striving to provide material that gives positive images based on the protected characteristics and challenges stereotypical images;
- Challenging any incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, and record any serious incidents as prescribed in the local authority and school's policies (e.g., reporting of racial incidents); and
- Supporting the work of support staff and encouraging them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents.

Section 6: Engagement

The views of learners and other key stakeholders (e.g., parents, carers, staff, school governors and the wider community) should assist in shaping the Equality Objectives identified in the Strategic Equality Plan.

Successful engagement requires information gathering and interaction with a range of different groups, whilst also remaining sensitive to the needs of individuals with different protected characteristics. Meaningfully securing the voices of learners, and their families and carers, is critical to understanding the needs of our learners and families, particularly the most vulnerable.

An extensive range of different engagement activities should be undertaken to inform strategic plans. These could include:

- An analysis of the survey responses or focus groups feedback on equality issues from a range of stakeholders including learners, parents/carers, staff, governors and the wider community. Some consideration should also be given to analysing information according to protected characteristics to inform strategic planning;
- Learner voice activities and school council feedback;
- An analysis of school complaints;
- Feedback provided from parental consultation events and workshops;
- Feedback from annual review processes; and
- Outcomes from community cohesion events and activities.

When consulting, important consideration has been given to the most effective and reliable means of gathering information. Interpretation facilities might be required for those for whom English is an additional language or are newly arrived in this country. Modified materials should also been considered and used to ensure accessibility for those with disabilities or ALN.

Consideration should also be given to how a school will share this information with key stakeholders (e.g., through annual reports, school website, newsletters etc.).

Section 7: Data Analysis and Evaluation

The school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning processes should also inform the Strategic Equality Plan. A comparison of the school's data, with local or national data (where available) should also been taken into consideration if appropriate, including:

- Pupil attainment and progress data relating to different vulnerable groups and protected characteristics;
- An analysis of curriculum access and choices according to vulnerable groups and protected characteristics;
- Attendance, exclusion and bullying/harassment data analysed according to vulnerable groups and protected characteristics where appropriate;
- Engagement levels in enrichment activities according to vulnerable groups or protected characteristics;
- Data on the recruitment, development and retention of employees; and an
- Evaluation of historical actions and outcomes in relation to equality.

In addition to this robust self-evaluation should also contribute to the development of the plan, and there should be alignment and synergy between the School Improvement Plan and the Strategic Equality Plan.

Consideration should also be given to how the school will share this information with key stakeholders (e.g., through annual reports, school website, newsletters, etc.).

Section 8: Developing a Strategic Equality Plan

These guidelines have been developed to assist schools in developing a Strategic Equality Plan and its Equality Objectives. A model policy for a School Strategic Equality Plan is provided in Appendix A. These have both been developed to reflect the requirements of the Equality Act and the associated Public Sector Duties, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance which highlights the key components of on what should be included within a Strategic Equality Plan.

The format is provided as a guide only, schools may use other formats if they so wish. Irrespective of the format adopted, all schools must develop and publish Equality Objectives and a four-year Strategic Equality Plan that remains current and is updated in a timely manner to ensure that there is no gap in planning or delivery for improvement. The Equality Objectives and the Plan should be aimed at delivering measurable equality outcomes which improves the lives of individuals and communities and should detail the steps that will be taken by the school to achieve them.

The Policy and Plan must also demonstrate that the school collects relevant information and evidence on which to base its decisions and details the processes that will be followed to monitor progress and assess the impact of the proposals. The Strategic Equality Plan needs to be relevant to a school's context and reflects the nature of any equality issues experienced in the school. Alignment between the Strategic Equality

Plan and other key strategic plans and policies should be evident and should highlight local, regional and national agendas.

Section 9: Gender Pay Objective

The legislation requires that a gender pay objective is developed where a gender pay difference is identified, this will require statistical analysis of pay data and comparisons between male/female staff.

Some schools will not be able to identify a pay difference as the staff group will be too small to make statistical analysis appropriate and ensure that staff are not identifiable, if this is the case then this needs to be stated and an explanation provided.

If you do not have a gender pay objective then you need to state the reasons why.

Section 10: Staff Professional Learning

It is a statutory requirement to promote knowledge and understanding of the general duty amongst staff and to identify and address training needs in this area during the performance management process. This should be routinely undertaken on an annual basis and outcomes should contribute to professional learning plans in the school.

Section 11: Equality Impact Assessments

Equality impact assessments should be routinely undertaken to review of current and proposed plans and policies in order to ensure that no person is disadvantaged by school activities through discrimination. Impact assessments should be undertaken on an on-going process to ensure that the school's plans and policies are developed in an increasingly inclusive and equitable way. Where impact assessments have been undertaken, they should influence changes to policy and the review of the Strategic Equality Plan itself.

Section 12: Accessibility Plans

It is important to note that the requirement to prepare an Accessibility Plan is separate to the Strategic Equality Plan and as such two plans are required. Further information on Accessibility Plans can be found at Policies | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)

Section 13: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Strategic Equality Plan

The Strategic Equality Plan should be routinely evaluated to ensure that it is effective in delivering improvement, promoting equality and fairness and in tacking any forms of discrimination. Key stakeholders should be involved in evaluating the impact of the actions detailed against each Equality Objective within the Strategic Equality Plan. A school is not required to identify actions against every protected characteristic, but the rationale and the evidence base for selecting key Equality Objectives and for excluding any protected characteristics should be provided.

An annual report evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategic Equality Plan should be shared with the governing body and they should be actively involved in shaping any new plans. The chair of governors should provide an overview of the success of the plan in improving equality in the Annual Report to Parents/Carers.

Section 14: Publishing and Monitoring Results

Schools should annually provide a report detailing the Strategic Equality Plan and its evaluation of it to the governing body. Information should also be detailed in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents/Carers.

All data collected for the purpose of analysing trends by protected characteristic in performance, engagement and satisfaction with the support and provision offered by the school, should be processed in accordance with data protection requirements and legislation.

The Strategic Equality Plan must be monitored by the governing body and all new plans submitted to the local authority on request.

Section 15: Conclusion

In summary, it is a statutory requirement for every school to have a Strategic Equality Plan which clearly sets out how they have met their legal responsibilities in developing the 4 year plan and details a school's specific Equality Objectives for the duration of the Plan. They should also include detail on how the Equality Objectives were identified, the approach taken in respect of engagement and self-evaluation, together with clear actions detailed in the plan on how the Equality Objectives will be met. Governing bodies must comply with the requirements of the Act and ensure that the Plan is closely reviewed, with annual updates on progress is provided to the governing body and to parents/carers in the Annual Report.

Section 16: Further Guidance

Further details can be obtained from Inclusion Services (Ceri.L.Jones@rctcbc.gov.uk) or from the Equality and Diversity Team at equality@rctcbc.gov.uk.

Date Ratified by Governors ..17.10.2022.....

Chair of Governors: Mr J Woodington .....

Headteacher: Mrs. T. Harries .....T. Harries.....

Review Date: ..October 2025.....