



Equality Policy

APPROVED BY: Trust Board,

POLICY OWNER: Trust Director of Inclusion

DATE: September 2025

NEXT REVIEW DATE DUE BY: September 2027

1. Rationale:

The Directors of the Trust, Local Academy Committee Governors, and Trust and school leaders value each member of every school community as an individual created in the image of God. We are committed to the implementation of a policy to achieve equality of opportunity for all staff, students, Directors, Local Academy Committee Governors and visitors, meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and any amendments thereafter, as we do so. Equality does not mean treating everyone the same; it means treating people fairly, with respect, having regard for their needs, rights and wishes. Sometimes, this might mean making reasonable adjustments or giving people extra help so that they have the same chances.

The purpose of the legislation is to bring together existing equalities legislation. These are the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act of 1976, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and three major statutory instruments of recent years protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. It also builds on the 2006 Equality Act which instigated the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The 2010 Act imposes equality duties in respect of each of the equality strands (now called protected characteristics).

The protected characteristics are:

- Age (refers to school employees but not to the treatment of students / prospective students)
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships (only in relation to employees)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act has a single equality duty of positively combating inequality. The definition of equality is wider than it has been before (see above) and requirements that in the past have been seen as good practice are now legally enforceable. To meet the requirements of the Equality Act, the Trust will give 'due regard' to the need to:

See end of Policy for updates table

- Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance Equality of Opportunity, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster Good Relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2. Aims and Values

As a Faith Community, we place a strong emphasis on creating and sustaining an ethos based on Christian principles. Care, understanding and respect for each other are paramount, and we aim to nurture and develop positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes within our school community. Religious education and collective worship are central to the life of our schools, whilst reflecting the rich variety of religious traditions and diversity of our society. Our ethos, vision and values ensure that every pupil, member of staff and others in our schools community, is given an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. In addition, each individual is entitled to learn, teach or work in a supportive environment and to benefit from the diversity of our school community.

- The Trust is committed to providing a curriculum that enhances the education of all students, regardless of their gender, race, or religion or any other protected characteristic.
- We celebrate the fact that the community, of which the Trust plays an integral part, has a rich diversity of age, gender, ability, culture and religion. The Trust is therefore committed to ensuring that all are given every opportunity to develop their talents to the full.
- The Trust is determined to prepare all students for a life of working with others in a community which is richly diverse - socially, culturally and religiously. The Trust hopes to achieve this by offering them the experience of life in a community founded on Gospel values and working together in harmony.
- As a Catholic community the Trust has the duty to care for all, with preferential consideration for the poor, and to ensure that we provide for those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.
- The Trust is committed to removing or minimising any disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (RPC) that is connected to that characteristic.
- We will always strive take steps to meet the needs of persons who share an RPC that is different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of our Trust and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equality and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance, and information to enable them to do this.

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. The Board of Directors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data on attendance, behaviour, examination results and staff workforce) and qualitative evidence (e.g. staff, student and parent surveys). They will consider the use of Equalities impact assessment where significant

strategic decisions are made regarding budget, policy review, improvement planning, recruitment and retention, behaviour and discipline and curriculum review.

Every Local Academy Committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment.

Each Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team is responsible for implementing the policy within their own school; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination. They will produce a school specific equalities action plan and report to their Local Academy Committee at least annually on the progress and impact of their action plan and publish this information.

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- challenge prejudice and discrimination
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability
- maintain the highest expectations of success for all pupils
- support different groups of pupils in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equality and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will provide guidance and information in school newsletters to enable them to do this. To the best of our ability, we will check that invited speakers and school partners are not involved with discriminatory or extremist groups.

4. Employees

The Trust is totally committed to protecting the confidentiality of its community and adheres to the Data Protection Act/GDPR. All schools within the Trust collect and analyse a range of profile information for our staff, Directors and Local Academy Committee Governors. The Directors recognise the need for positive role models and fair distribution of responsibility among staff. Therefore, we aim to:

- Encourage the career development and aspirations of all Trust staff
- Provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of learners
- Ensure that access to opportunities for professional development is monitored on equality grounds
- Ensure at least one member of a staff recruitment panel will have completed Safer Recruitment Training and all panel members will be aware of what they should do to avoid discrimination and ensure equality and good practice throughout the recruitment and selection process.
- Ensure Equality policies and practices are covered in the induction of new staff, trainee teachers Directors and Governors.
- Ensure all temporary staff are made aware of equality policies and practices.
- Ensure Employment policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to check conformity with legislation.

Note: Under the Equality Act 2010, Schools with a religious character can claim that a certain religious denomination or belief is considered to be a genuine occupational requirement of that role. This applies particularly to those roles that provide spiritual leadership e.g. Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of RE Department and usually for RE teachers. It also applies to Board Directors and Governors. However, this would not apply for all staff in school. In addition, there are also instances in which a job will qualify for a genuine occupational qualification on the grounds of gender. However, only in very few instances would this be permissible, for example, where the job is likely to involve physical contact with members of the opposite sex, or matters of decency or privacy are involved.

5. Equality Legislation Guidance

This single Equality Policy replaces the individual Race, Disability Gender, Sexual Orientation, Transgender and gender reassignment policies. However, the following descriptors are still relevant in current legislation.

5.1 Race

The term race includes colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin and citizenship as well as race.

The Race Equality Duty:

- **What is it?**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (which includes the Race Equality Duty) amended the Race Relations Act 1976. It came into effect from April 2001.

- **Who is covered?**

Learners, parents/carers, prospective learners and parents/carers, staff, job applicants, governors and others using school facilities

- **General duties:**

- Tackle racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

- **Specific duties:**

- From May 2002 publish a Race Equality Policy which includes an implementation strategy or action plan (effectively a Race Equality Scheme), monitor it annually and review it every three years
- Involve appropriate and diverse stakeholders in developing the policy
- Monitoring the impact of the school's policies on learners' performance and progress
- Provide ethnic monitoring data on their staff

- **Reporting racist incidents in schools:**

Schools are required to have in place a procedure for dealing with and reporting racist incidents, which includes providing an annual summary of racist incidents to the Local Academy Committee.

5.2 Disability

- **What is a disability?**

Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has an effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be:

- substantial (more than minor or trivial)
- adverse
- long-term (it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year or for the rest of the life of the person affected)

There is no need for a person to have a specific, medically-diagnosed cause for their impairment – what matters is the effect of the impairment, not the cause. Examples include hearing or sight impairments, a significant mobility difficulty, mental health conditions or learning difficulties. There are many other types of condition, illness or injury that can result in a person being *disabled* (e.g. diabetes, asthma, cancer, arthritis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, heart conditions, facial disfigurement).

- **General duties**

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability-related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage disabled people's participation in public life
- Take steps to take into account people's disabilities.

- **Specific duties**

From December 2006 for secondary schools must prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, monitor it annually and review it every three years. Schools must involve disabled people in the development of the scheme and set out in their scheme:

- how disabled people have been involved in its preparation
- their arrangements for gathering information on the effect of the school's policies on:
- the recruitment, development, and retention of disabled employees
- the educational opportunities available to and the achievements of disabled learners
- the school's methods for assessing the impact of its current or proposed policies and practices on disability equality
- the steps the school is going to take to meet the general duty (the school's action plan)
- the arrangements for using information to support the review of the action plan and to inform subsequent schemes.

5.3 Gender

The term gender includes boys, girls, men and women, and transgender/transsexual people. Sexual orientation is a distinct protected characteristic.

- **What is the difference between sex and gender?**

- Sex refers to biological status as male or female. It includes physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia.
- Gender is a term that is often used to refer to ways that people act, interact, or feel about themselves, which are associated with boys/men and girls/women. While aspects of biological sex are the same across different cultures, aspects of gender may not be.

- **Sexual Orientation**

Heterosexism is any prejudice and discrimination against individuals and groups who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, Transgender (LGBT+) or are perceived to be so. It is based on the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Expressions of dislike, contempt or fear based on heterosexism are usually known as **homophobia**, although **lesophobia** and **biphobia** are also coming into use.

Whether through institutional practice or personal behaviour, the prevalence of heterosexism is likely to mean that LGBT+ people feel excluded and unsafe. This effect can be mitigated by an actively welcoming and supportive environment. **Sexual orientation** is defined as an individual's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex as her or him (gay or lesbian), people of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or people of both sexes (bisexual).

- **General duties**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity between male and female learners and between men and women
- Promote good relations

- **Specific duties**

- From April 2007, prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how the school will meet its general and specific duties and set out its gender equality objectives, as well as its plans for stakeholder consultation and impact assessment
- Monitor the scheme annually and review it every three years.

- **Transgenderism and gender re-assignment**

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex. Gender re-assignment is the process a transgender person goes through to change sex.

- **Publicising this Policy**

This Policy is a public document that is available to any interested stakeholder and is published on all our school Websites. The annual report of non-confidential staff and student data is presented to the Local Academy Committee and reported back to the STCAT Board of Directors. The annual report is used in conjunction with other relevant data, documentation, and policies, to inform the schools equality objective planning and the review of previous objectives. The Board of Directors and Local Academy Committee have a legal obligation to report on the schools single Equality Annual Review. The Board of Directors and Local Academy Committee are responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the current Equality Legislation and that this policy including its related procedures and practices are implemented.

This policy will be reviewed as part of a two-year cycle.

EQUALITIES MONITORING:

To what extent does this policy have any implications for people of relevant protected characteristics (RPC) as outlined below? • Age • Disability • Gender reassignment • Marriage and civil partnership • Pregnancy and maternity • Religion or belief • Sex • Sexual orientation (Equality Act, 2010)	Assessment: This policy has implications for all of the RPC groups. The policy represents the intent of the Directors of the Trust to ensure that equality and respect for the individual is placed at the heart of our Trust and is a direct reflection of the aims of our organisation. The policy itself does not accentuate the risk of discrimination or unfair treatment of any member of staff or student with RPC.
Will this policy advantage or disadvantage any particular group?	No
How will this policy, if relevant, promote equality of opportunity across our Trust?	This policy will promote equality of opportunity through the implementation of the Action Plan in Appendix 1.
Success criteria and monitoring	Success criteria: See action plan in Appendix 1. Monitoring: • Directors will receive an annual progress report on the implementation of the plan in Appendix 1. • Directors and Local Academy Committee Governors shall receive equalities monitoring information that allows them to monitor for evidence of discrimination annually.

Appendix 1: ACTION PLAN: ST THOMAS CATHOLIC ACADEMIES TRUST SEPTEMBER 2025 - 2028

The following action plan outlines what will be achieved in the following years with regards to meeting the Single Equality Duty over the next three years. This plan applies to all schools in our Trust and may be supplemented by a school-specific plan if appropriate. The plan will be developed further by September 2023 as part of the 3-year cycle of this plan, in response to the findings of evaluation processes set out in each section.

DUTY UNDER EQUALITY ACT	INTENT	IMPLEMENTATION How are we going to do it?	IMPACT	WHO	WHEN?
RACE: Tackle racial discrimination	Fully evaluate the nature lived experience of students and staff in our Trust to test for systemic discrimination.	- To review behaviour data with reference to ethnicity to ensure that all students are being treated equally. - To review academic performance indicators	- School leaders and all those involved in governance will have a deep understanding of the disparities that may affect our family of schools - School leaders will respond to findings of annual evaluation to integrate actions to tackle discrimination wherever it might occur into improvement plans	Director of Inclusion	Annually by 1.12 to feed into Annual Report
RACE: - Promote equality of opportunity - Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups	- Drive awareness of race equality - Our school staffing community to become increasingly reflective of the diverse community we serve	- Ensure race equality assessment is an active consideration in the development of all policies in all schools - Develop targeted sponsored internships to promote recruitment from communities that reflect our ethnic diversity	- All policies in the academy Trust to have an equalities assessment at point of renewal from September 2023 onwards - Cohorts of STCAT trainee teachers from September 2026 to be ethnically diverse and a direct consequence of targeted marketing	CoSec Director of Training and IT	Complete 09.26 09.26
DISABILITY:	Drive awareness of disability equality across our schools	Ensure disability equality assessment is an active	All policies in the academy Trust to have an equalities assessment at point	CoSec	Complete 09.26

DUTY UNDER EQUALITY ACT	INTENT	IMPLEMENTATION How are we going to do it?	IMPACT	WHO	WHEN?
- Promote equality of opportunity - Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people - Encourage disabled people's participation in public life	Further develop our specialist services to students with a range of SEN and Disability to ensure inclusion across our school settings, gaining access to high quality education throughout.	consideration in the development of all policies in all schools Promote opportunities for development of specialist provision within our schools where we have the capacity to do so	of renewal from September 2023 onwards Additional specialist provision in place in at least one Trust school in each area (Slough, Bucks, Luton and Central Beds)	Director of Inclusion	As LA's agree funding
GENDER - Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment - Promote equality of opportunity between male and female learners and between men and women - Promote good relations	- Drive awareness of gender equality across our schools - Further reduce the Gender Pay gap - Ensure our Catholic schools are places where people of all sexual orientation are welcomed and valued for the person they are and God wishes them to be.	- Ensure gender equality assessment is an active consideration in the development of all policies in all schools - Ensure we are able to retain quality leaders through active consideration of flexible working - Following consultation to promote awareness, all school websites to carry positive inclusive statement outlining our commitment to celebrating the gifts and talents of all people and welcoming all to our family of schools. - Teaching of RSE to include a positive affirmation of diverse family situations, celebrating the	- All policies in the academy Trust to have an equalities assessment at point of renewal from September 2023 onwards - The gender pay gap will continue to narrow and females will be proportionally represented in senior roles across our academy Trust - LGBT+ staff and students to identify schools in STCAT as places where they are comfortable and celebrated as they people they are without any sense of exclusion or marginalisation. - Independent audit review of RSE highlights the progressive and inclusive nature of our curriculum that will skilfully celebrate the Glory of God present in the love between all people.	CoSec CEO Director of Inclusion Director of Mission	Complete 09.26 09.28 09.28 09.28

DUTY UNDER EQUALITY ACT	INTENT	IMPLEMENTATION How are we going to do it?	IMPACT	WHO	WHEN?
		love that exists in those family units			

Updates:

September 2025	Updates to Appendix 1 - date changes and changes of titles.

