



# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

**October 2019**

To be reviewed Oct 2020

**James Montgomery Academy Trust**

## **Policy statement**

The James Montgomery Academy Trust (JMAT) is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging cultural diversity amongst its workforce. The JMAT aims for its workforce to be truly representative of the community it serves and that each employee feels respected and able to give their best while at work. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

We do not discriminate against staff on the basis of age, special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability (**protected characteristics**).

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat pupils, parents, governors, third party organisations and former staff members.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

### **Who is covered by the policy?**

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including members of the senior leadership team, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors, support staff, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, volunteers, supply/agency staff (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy) whether permanent or on a fixed term contract.

### **Who is responsible for this policy?**

The Local Governing Body (LGB) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Head of School/headteacher.

All members of the senior leadership team within the James Montgomery Academy Trust (JMAT) and its schools must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities.

Head of School/headteacher are responsible for ensuring:

- All employees are aware of the requirements of this policy and their individual responsibilities.
- All employment matters are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and are appropriately documented.
- Any concerns raised within the scope of this policy are treated seriously and sensitively.

Employees are responsible for:

- Not unlawfully discriminating in any employment practice or process.
- Raising with management any suspected discriminatory acts or practice.
- Co-operating with measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Refraining from harassment or intimidation of others.
- Refraining from victimising an employee who has made allegations or complaints of discrimination or who has provided information about such discrimination.

## **Scope and purpose of the policy**

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

This policy aims to:

- Reinforce the JMAT commitment to equal opportunities in employment practice.
- Ensure that JMAT fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with relevant legislation, such as Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Promote a climate in which good equal opportunity practice exists.
- Ensure every employee is treated with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that any form of intimidation, victimisation, bullying or harassment will not be tolerated.
- Ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all.
- Challenge breaches of equality and regard such breaches as misconduct which may lead to disciplinary.

## **Forms of discrimination**

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

## **Recruitment and selection**

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure

that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Short listing of applicants will be done by more than one person wherever possible.

Job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. Pre-employment health related checks – up to a point of an individual being offered a job – health related questions can only be asked to;

- Decide whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made for the person to participate in the selection process.
- Decide whether an applicant can carry out a function that is essential (“intrinsic”) to the job.
- Monitor diversity amongst people making applications for jobs.
- Take positive action to assist disabled people.

Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of a HR Advisor (who will first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account).

We are required by law to ensure that all staff are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be expected to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an applicant's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before short listing, and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

### **Staff training and promotion and conditions of service**

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they offer equal opportunities for all.

## **Termination of employment**

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

## **Disability discrimination**

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager or Head of School/headteacher to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager or Head of School/headteacher may wish to consult with you and a medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

## **Fixed-term employees and agency workers**

We monitor our use of fixed-term employees and supply/agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

## **Part-time work**

We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Conditions and in consideration of contract of employment.

## **Breaches of this policy**

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter with your line manager or Head of School/headteacher.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.

False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

## **Pay**

Equal pay – the pay of staff should be granted on their skills and abilities and not based on a particular characteristic.

## **Gender Pay Gap**

The JMAT will ensure as far as possible that pay is equal between employees; particularly that it is equal between males and females. It will publish the table of statistics in accordance with [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and Gender Pay Gap Reporting.

## **Pay secrecy**

JMAT will not prevent or restrict employees from having a discussion to establish if differences in pay exist that are related to protected characteristics.