



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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1. Introduction

This Equality and Diversity Policy represents a formal and comprehensive commitment to equality, valuing the rich and diverse nature of our school community, and embracing inclusivity both as an education provider and as an employer.

The Riverview Family of Schools (RFoS) believes that the fundamental key to social mobility is through a high-quality education that leads directly to students fulfilling their potential. This core belief and commitment is shared by all stakeholders. Valuing, protecting, and championing diversity and equality is a crucial, non-negotiable element of providing the transformative educational experience we strive for.

In response to major national educational reforms in September 2026, this policy formally integrates the expectations of Ofsted's updated Education Inspection Framework, specifically aligning with the newly introduced, graded evaluation area for 'Inclusion'.

This framework moves beyond simple compliance, evaluating how equity is felt in daily classroom life, playgrounds, and student outcomes.

This policy sets the baseline for our annual School Inclusion Strategy, published on our public website by 31 December each year, which acts as a strategic condition for the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF).

2. Policy Aims & Scope

The Riverview Family of Schools is committed to actively advancing and achieving equality of opportunity for all students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and visitors. We believe that all people are of equal value, are entitled to equality of opportunity, and that our rich diversity enriches our community. The Federation actively seeks to promote a school and working environment that is free from discrimination, prejudice, and harassment, where every individual is valued and championed.

2.1 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

In accordance with our statutory obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the school exercises due regard and active planning across the three aspects of the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- **Eliminate Discrimination**
To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance Opportunity**

To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- **Foster Good Relations**

To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, promoting mutual respect and understanding.

2.2 Legally Protected and Locally Included Characteristics

This policy encompasses a wider scope of inclusion than the statutory minimum. It applies directly to all of the following characteristics:

- **Age:** Protecting all members of our community, with special safeguarding vigilance around infants under 1 and teenagers aged 10-18 who represent high-risk groups.
- **Disability:** Including physical disabilities, neurodevelopmental disorders, severe allergies (under Benedict's Law), and Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- **Gender & Sex:** Promoting gender equality, actively addressing gender gaps, and challenging restrictive stereotypes.
- **Gender Reassignment:** Ensuring full protection and a highly supportive, case-by-case approach for gender-questioning and trans individuals.
- **Pregnancy & Maternity:** Supporting pregnant students, new mothers, and staff members returning from maternity leave with flexible pathways and work-life balance.
- **Race:** Encompassing nationality, ethnic or national origin, and nomadic heritages such as the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities.
- **Religion or Belief:** Respecting and accommodating all faiths, non-religious, or secular beliefs in our curriculum, dress codes, and calendars.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Creating an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students, staff, and families.
- **Marital Status & Civil Partnership:** Ensuring parity of treatment across all recognized legal unions.
- **Domestic Circumstances:** Locally included; recognizing that diverse family structures (single-parent households, cohabiting couples, foster or kinship care) require equal respect and tailored support.
- **Carer Responsibilities:** Locally included; supporting staff and kinship carers (who are statistically older and more likely to experience health/disability pressures) with flexible systems.
- **Socio-Economic Background:** Locally included; driving social mobility, lifting children out of food poverty via free breakfast and lunch provision, and reducing financial uniform pressures.
- **Fixed or Part-Time status:** Locally included; ensuring equal pay, development, and respect for all employment contracts.
- **Trade Union Membership:** Locally included; respecting and upholding the right of staff to engage in union representation and collaborative consultation.

2.3 Student Social Transitioning Protocols (Statutory RSHE 2026)

In strict compliance with the DfE's revised statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance, the Federation implements a structured, balanced protocol for any student requesting a social transition at school (such as adopting a new name, alternative pronouns, or a change in gender-specific dress):

- **No Blanket Bans:** The school does not enforce blanket bans on social transitioning. Every request is considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, focusing on the child's long-term welfare, emotional wellbeing, and safety.
- **Expected Parent Involvement:** As a core principle, schools are expected to involve parents or carers in all decisions regarding a student's request to social transition, including changes to name, pronouns, or dress at school.
- **Safeguarding Exception:** The requirement to involve parents may only be bypassed if there is a documented, credible safeguarding risk to the child, in which case the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be consulted immediately, and action taken in line with child protection policies.
- **Balanced Language:** Teachers and staff must avoid using gendered or stereotyped language that might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys, ensuring a supportive and respectful classroom tone.

3. Policy Values & Inclusion Principles

Equality of opportunity is fundamental to our core values, in which fairness and equity for all represent a basic right. This policy is underpinned by the values of social justice, social mobility through education, equal respect, and the active dismantling of prejudice, stereotypes, and barriers.

To operationalise these values under the 2026 educational framework, the Federation adopts and explicitly integrates the Seven Principles of Inclusion required under the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF). These principles govern how we structure our curriculum, leadership, and resources:

- **Ambitious Leadership and Governance:** School governors, trustees, and leaders must genuinely embed inclusion, making it a permanent agenda item and driving an institutional culture of belonging.
- **Evidence-Based Support & Early Intervention:** Using data and regular, professional conversations to identify barriers early through our Disadvantage Index and putting robust, timely support in place.
- **High-Quality, Adaptive Teaching:** Structuring everyday classroom practice around the principle that effective inclusion starts with quality, adaptive teaching and a curriculum that works for all learners.
- **Enriching Provision Beyond the Classroom:** Ensuring that extra-curricular clubs, school trips, and sports activities are fully accessible to every student, regardless of physical or financial barriers.

- **A Safe, Respectful Culture:** Fostering a calm, orderly, and respectful school culture where bullying is not tolerated, differences are celebrated, and everyone should feel they belong and want to attend.
- **Strong Partnerships with Families:** Actively engaging with parents and carers, taking their unique knowledge of their children seriously, and working in close alignment with health, housing, and social services.
- **Inclusive & Accessible Environments:** Enforcing ongoing, systematic improvements to school accessibility, physical layouts, and sensory spaces to remove barriers for disabled students and staff.

4. Legalities & Regulatory Compliance

This policy statement is fully updated to September 2026. It is underpinned by key national legislation, workplace regulations, and statutory education guidance to ensure the Riverview Family of Schools fully complies with its legal obligations as both an education provider and an employer.

A. Primary Statutory Frameworks

- **Equality Act 2010:** Underpins our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance opportunity, and foster good relations.
- **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026:** Mandates putting pupil wellbeing and protection at the center of education, including compliance with 'Benedict's Law' (allergy safety) and monitored school attendance targets.
- **Education Act 1996 & Education Act 2002:** Statutory basis for school operations, admissions, place planning, and the provision of Relationships, Sex, and Health Education.

B. Employment & Workplace Protections

- **Employment Rights Act 1996 & Employment Rights Act 2025:** Provides core staff protections. The 2025 Act (taking effect in 2026) mandates that any internal report of sexual harassment automatically qualifies as a protected disclosure under whistleblowing law (April 2026), and requires employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment (October 2026).
- **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023:** Establishes the proactive legal duty for employers to actively anticipate, assess, and prevent sexual harassment from other staff and third parties, rather than reacting post-incident.
- **Regulations on Protected Statutes:** Including the Gender Reassignment Regulations (1999), Part-time Workers Regulations (2000), Fixed-term Employees Regulations (2002), and the Work and Families Act (2006).

C. Statutory Education & Inspection Guidance

- **Statutory RSHE Guidance (2026):** In force 1 September 2026, mandating updated curricula on online safety, healthy relationship boundaries, and parent-involvement protocols regarding student social transitioning.
- **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF):** Reflects the graded 'Inclusion' evaluation area and the mandate to publish an annual Inclusion Strategy by 31 December.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE):** Statutory safeguarding requirements, incorporating gender-questioning support and safer recruitment processes.

5. Communication & Engagement

To ensure transparency, collaboration, and shared responsibility, the Federation takes active, systematic steps to communicate this Equality and Diversity Policy to all stakeholders, including students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, contractors, and visitors:

- **Public & Digital Access:** This policy and the annual School Inclusion Strategy are published prominently on the website. The Inclusion Strategy must be published by 31 December each year.
- **Annual surveys:** Staff, students and parents are invited to share views annually on inclusive practice
- **Parent Advisory Groups:** Identified parents who have knowledge with regards to specific areas of inclusion and engagement, work with the Strategic SENCO to shape policy and practice
- **Contractor and Visitor Compliance:** All third-party contractors, agency workers, and visitors are provided with a summary of this policy upon arrival, highlighting our zero-tolerance stance on discrimination and harassment.

6. Responsibilities & Accountabilities

Achieving a truly inclusive and compliant school environment requires clear, documented accountability across all levels of the Riverview Family of Schools. Responsibilities are defined as follows:

A. The Governing Body

The Governing Body holds ultimate legal responsibility for ensuring the Federation meets its statutory obligations as an education provider and employer.

Governors are responsible for:

- Ensuring full legal compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (PSED), the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, the Worker Protection Act, and the Employment Rights Act.
- Overseeing, reviewing, and approving the annual School Inclusion Strategy for publication on the school website by 31 December.

- Monitoring the execution of 'Benedict's Law' (allergy safety) and the mobile phone statutory guidance.
- Reviewing annual anonymised data on exclusions, suspensions, staff recruitment, and harassment complaints to identify patterns and steer action.

B. The Federation Lead and Senior Leaders

All senior leaders provide active, high-profile leadership, modelling inclusion at every opportunity. They are responsible for:

- Translating this policy into daily operational practice and ensuring all school systems align with its values.
- Leading the development and implementation of the annual School Inclusion Strategy.
- Ensuring the statutory RSHE (2026) guidelines are fully implemented, and personally managing the student social transitioning protocols.
- Promoting a safe workplace culture, ensuring robust risk assessments are carried out, and taking prompt, decisive action on any harassment complaints.

C. Middle Leaders & Pastoral Staff

Senior, subject, and pastoral leaders are responsible for the daily execution of this policy within their teams and areas. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff know their responsibilities, complete mandatory training, and receive the support necessary to carry them out.
- Monitoring classroom practices to ensure high-quality, adaptive teaching is embedded as standard (Teachers' Standard 5).
- Applying the behaviour policy fairly and transparently,
- Proactively challenging stereotypes with purpose

D. All Staff (Teaching & Non-Teaching)

Every member of the school workforce is responsible for promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and avoiding any form of unfair discrimination. They are responsible for:

- Promoting a classroom and school culture of respect, safety, and mutual understanding.
- Actively intervening in and reporting any incidents of discrimination, bullying, or harassment perpetrated by students, other staff, or visitors.
- Executing adaptive everyday teaching to ensure students with SEND, disabilities, or disadvantage can fully access the curriculum.
- Maximise any opportunity to challenge student views, to understand them in order to amend them
- Complying with student-specific medical and allergy plans under Benedict's Law, and maintaining up-to-date training in emergency preparedness.

E. Students

Students are expected to be active participants in building a welcoming and respectful school community. They are responsible for:

- Demonstrating the core values of their school, upholding them in their daily actions and language.
- Respecting others, avoiding harmful stereotypes, and strictly refraining from any online or offline bullying and cyberbullying.
- Complying with the school's mobile phone restrictions, ensuring devices are not used during the school day unless a formal disability exemption is in place.
- Using the school's reporting systems to raise any concerns about prejudice, harassment, or discrimination.

7. Recruitment & Safer Selection

A diverse, highly skilled school workforce is essential to the success of the Riverview Family of Schools. The focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion is integral to our recruitment practices, enabling us to access a wider talent pool that enriches our organization. All recruitment is carried out fairly in accordance with the Federation's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

A. Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Requirement

In strict compliance with the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, the Federation requires all teachers who commence employment in state-funded primary or secondary schools from the implementation date to have or be actively working towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Unqualified teachers currently employed are supported through designated pathways to gain QTS, unless they fall under specific regulatory exemptions (such as overseas trained teachers with under 4 years' experience, or vocational instructors).

To support diversity and ensure we do not create unfair barriers for career-break returners (who are statistically disproportionately female), the school actively promotes multiple routes to QTS:

- **Employment-Based Initial Teacher Training (ITT):** Allowing candidates to study and earn QTS while remaining employed and earning a salary.
- **Teacher Apprenticeships:** Including the Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship and the Teacher Degree Apprenticeship (TDA), which allows candidates without a degree to study for a degree and gain QTS while employed.
- **Assessment Only Route:** Providing a streamlined, 1-to-1 assessment against the Teachers' Standards for experienced, unqualified teachers.

B. Monitoring and Safer Safeguarding

To ensure fair, unbiased selection, applicants are requested to complete an anonymised Equality Monitoring Form, which is processed by HR separately and plays no part in the selection or interview process. All advertisements and marketing materials are designed to actively celebrate and state our commitment to diversity.

Safer recruitment processes are rigorously employed to protect our community. In accordance with the Immigration, Asylum, and Nationality Act 2006, all appointed staff must demonstrate their eligibility to work in the UK before a confirmed offer is made, and are subject to enhanced DBS and suitability checks for working with children.

8. Remuneration, Pay & Conditions

The Riverview Family of Schools is a fair, transparent employer committed to ensuring that all employees are remunerated fairly based on their specific job role, without any form of discrimination.

Under the 2025/2026 employment reforms, the Federation implements several critical changes to pay and conditions:

- **Removal of Maximum Pay Band Ceilings:** To enable healthy competition and innovation, secondary legislation has removed the maximum pay band ceiling for teachers in maintained schools, allowing the Federation the flexibility to offer competitive, higher pay to attract and retain outstanding educators.
- **Workload and Wellbeing Reviews:** In line with the National Workload Action Group's recommendations, conditions of employment and workload drivers are reviewed annually. The school proactively seeks to ease unnecessary workload, allowing teachers and social work staff to focus their time on direct practice and support for children.

9. Staff Training & Development

All employees, regardless of role or contract status, deserve high-quality professional development. The Federation's bespoke professional development model ensures equal access to training, progression, and promotion opportunities. To meet the compliance demands of the 2026 framework, staff training incorporates the following mandatory modules:

- **Induction Training:** All new employees receive structured induction highlighting this policy and our institutional commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Preventative Harassment Training:** Training for all staff on recognizing, preventing, and reporting sexual harassment and third-party harassment. Managers and leaders receive advanced training on carrying out risk assessments, establishing clear reporting lines, and handling complaints in line with the Acas Code of Practice.
- **SEND and Adaptive Teaching:** Comprehensive training focusing on Teachers' Standard 5 (adapting teaching to meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with SEND or disabilities). This supports teachers in confidently executing everyday adaptive teaching, directly aligning with Ofsted's graded Inclusion expectations.

10. Inclusive Leadership

The Riverview Family of Schools recognizes that inclusive leadership encourages growth, creativity, and innovation at all levels of the organization.

Inclusive leadership is inspirational, motivational, and crucial to building a supportive, respectful, and safe school culture. Therefore, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive leadership principles is an explicit, weighted element of the selection process for any leadership or management post within the Federation.

All leaders are expected to actively foster inclusion, value staff workload and wellbeing, ensure team decision-making is open and free from bias, and manage workplace risk with transparency.

11. Proactive Duty to Prevent Workplace Sexual Harassment

In accordance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and subsequent Employment Rights Act provisions, the Riverview Family of Schools operates under a proactive, preventative duty. We actively anticipate scenarios where sexual harassment may occur, assess risks, and implement robust, documented measures to prevent harassment. We do not wait for an incident to occur before taking action.

A. The 'All Reasonable Steps' Threshold

Starting in October 2026, the statutory threshold is elevated to taking 'all reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment. The Federation complies with this high standard by documenting and executing a systematic plan, which includes:

- Conducting and regularly updating a formal sexual harassment risk assessment across all school environments.
- Publishing clear, accessible policies and establishing robust, confidential, and anonymous reporting channels.
- Delivering mandatory, recorded training to all staff and advanced risk-management training to school leaders.
- Maintaining a secure, centralised log of all complaints and near-miss reports to identify and address any patterns of unwanted behaviour.

B. Liability for Third-Party Harassment

Also taking effect in October 2026, the Federation is directly liable if an employee is harassed by a third party in the course of their work (including parents, contractors, visitors, or members of the public) and the school has failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it. This liability spans harassment related to sex or any other protected characteristic. To mitigate this risk, the school:

- Enforces strict codes of conduct for all parents, visitors, and contractors on school premises.

- Ensures that third-party contracts include explicit clauses detailing our zero-tolerance stance on harassment.
- Requires staff who meet alone with parents or visitors to do so in visible, accessible meeting rooms, or with a colleague present where a risk is identified.

C. Enhanced Whistleblowing Protections

From 6 April 2026, any internal report or disclosure of sexual harassment made by a worker automatically counts as a protected disclosure under whistleblowing legislation. This ensures that staff who report harassment are fully protected from any workplace detriment, retaliation, or unfair dismissal.

Disclosures no longer need to be framed as legal breaches or health and safety issues; they are directly protected as a matter of sexual harassment reporting to encourage earlier, safer reporting.

12. Inclusive, Safe & Accessible School Environment

The physical, cultural, and academic environment of our schools must be structured to promote safety, health, and a profound sense of belonging for all students, especially those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, or disabled.

A. Allergy Safety & Benedict's Law Compliance

In strict compliance with the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (Benedict's Law), the Federation maintains a mandatory, written allergy safety and management policy. Because severe allergies (particularly those carrying a risk of anaphylaxis) can constitute a disability under the Equality Act where they have a substantial, long-term effect, the school provides systematic support:

- Maintaining clear, individualized allergy action plans for all affected students, with emergency adrenaline auto-injectors readily accessible.
- Enlisting mandatory staff training in symptom recognition, rapid response, and the administration of adrenaline devices.
- Making reasonable adjustments to food provision, school kitchens, and classroom activities to prevent cross-contamination and eliminate barriers to full participation.

B. Mobile Phone Restrictions & Disability Exemptions

In line with statutory guidance from the Secretary of State, the Federation prohibits the use and access of mobile phones and personal communication devices by students during the school day. This measure is designed to promote a calm, focused, and inclusive environment, and to significantly reduce opportunities for cyberbullying, distraction, and digital harm. Research indicates this has a particularly positive impact on girls' mental health and wellbeing, as they are statistically more vulnerable to online harassment and harmful social media content.

To ensure that this policy does not disadvantage disabled students, school leaders are required to grant formal, documented mobile phone exemptions and reasonable adjustments for students who require access to a device for:

- Medical monitoring (e.g., tracking blood glucose levels or other physiological metrics).
- Utilizing assistive technology specified in an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) or SEN plan to support learning in the classroom.

More information is in the Mobile Device Policy.

C. Reducing School Uniform Costs

To deliver the statutory commitment to reduce the cost of education for families, the Federation enforces a strict limit on the number of compulsory branded uniform items (including PE uniform) required.

This measure provides important benefits:

- **Financial Relief:** Allowing parents to purchase low-cost generic items from high-street retailers, significantly benefiting low-income families.
- **Disability and Health Flexibility:** Increasing the flexibility of fabrics, styles, and adaptive clothing available in the open market for students with sensory or physical adjustments.
- **Religious & Cultural Sensitivity:** Reducing the cost of religion-specific uniform items and allowing families to choose fabrics and designs in line with their faith and cultural heritages.

D. Off-Site Direction & Exclusions

To remove any ambiguity and align behaviour management with maintained school standards, the Federation codifies the statutory power under Section 29A of the Education Act 2002 to direct students temporarily to an alternative location (such as alternative provision or a partner school) to improve their behaviour. This off-site direction is subject to strict statutory safeguards:

- It is a time-limited intervention aimed at early behaviour improvement, rather than a permanent exclusion.
- The mainstream school must remain in close, weekly contact with the alternative provider and visit the child weekly to support integration and prevent isolation.

E. Children Not in School (CNIS) & Home Education

The Federation actively co-operates with the local authority's compulsory Children Not in School (CNIS) registers to ensure no child slips under the safeguarding radar. In accordance with the 2026 Act, parent/carer rights to home educate are respected, provided the education is suitable. However, to protect the most vulnerable children, parents must obtain formal local authority consent before withdrawing a student from school to home educate if the child is:

- Subject to an active child protection enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- On a Child Protection Plan (CPP), or was on a CPP in the last five years.

- Registered at a special school, special academy, or independent special school under placements made by the local authority.

13. Complaints Handling & Detriment Protection

The Federation will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying by or against employees, students, or third parties. All complaints are treated with utmost seriousness and processed promptly:

- **Staff Complaints:** Any employee who raises a complaint regarding discrimination, harassment, or a breach of this policy should do so in accordance with the RFoS Grievance Policy and Procedure, which adheres to the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- **External & Third-Party Complaints:** Any external candidate, contractor, agency worker, visitor, or parent should raise complaints in relation to discrimination or recruitment with the Federation Business Manager.
- **Protection from Detriment:** To foster an open, safe environment, the Federation guarantees that any worker or student who makes a complaint (even if it is subsequently not upheld) will face no disciplinary action or negative treatment, provided the complaint was not made maliciously.

14. Monitoring, Review & Strategic Alignment

The effectiveness of this policy is monitored closely and reviewed annually by the Governing Body. To ensure continuous improvement, this policy is strategically aligned with the annual review of our School Inclusion Strategy, due by 31 December. The annual review incorporates:

- Evaluating the impact of our Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) allocations and core budget on pupil outcomes.
- Conducting anonymised staff and student surveys to understand the lived experiences of inclusion and safety within our schools.
- Reviewing the centralised log of sexual harassment and third-party harassment near-misses to update risk assessments and training programmes.
- Analyzing exclusions, suspensions, and attendance rates across different demographic groups to actively target and close any disparities.