



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

### **Statement of intent**

MEPA Academy recognises that certain groups in society have historically been disadvantaged because of unlawful discrimination they have faced due to their race, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, religion/belief, sexual orientation or age. This policy will put in place a range of actions to eliminate prejudice, unlawful discrimination and victimisation within the school community and workforce.

### **1. Legal framework**

1.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011;
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017;
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED);
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

1.2 This policy also has due regard for non-statutory guidance, including the following:

- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'

1.3 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Admissions Policy;
- Complaints Procedures Policy;
- Equal Opportunities Policy.

1.4 The Equality Act 2010 provides a modern, single legal framework with three broad duties:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Advance equality of opportunity;
- Foster good relations.

1.5 For the purpose of this policy, the Equality Act 2010 will be referred to as 'the Act'.

1.6 MEPA College fully understands the principles of the Act and the work needed to ensure that those with protected characteristics are not discriminated against and are given equal opportunities.

1.7 Protected characteristics, under the Act, are as follows:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnicity;
- Sex;
- Gender reassignment;

- Maternity and pregnancy;
- Religion and belief;
- Sexual orientation;
- Marriage and civil partnership.

1.8 The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of MEPA College to discriminate against, harass or victimise a student or potential student:

- In relation to admissions;
- In the way it provides education for students;
- In the way it provides students access to any benefit, facility or service.

1.9 MEPA College's liability not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left the school, but will apply to subsequent actions connected to the previous relationship between school and students, such as the provision of references on former students or access to 'old students' communications and activities.

1.10 MEPA College will promote equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants and will work in line with the Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work Policy.

## **2. Principles and Aims**

2.1 We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents, as of equal value, regardless of any protected characteristic.

2.2 Our policies, procedures and activities will not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences in life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barriers and disadvantages which people may face in relation to any protected characteristic.

2.3 MEPA College will promote race equality and have due regard to eliminating unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

2.4 MEPA College will promote disability equality, ensuring equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment, and encouraging participation by disabled people in public life.

2.5 MEPA College will promote gender equality by eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote the equality of opportunity between men and women, girls and boys.

2.6 Transgender people are explicitly covered by PSED. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'transgender' refers to an individual whose gender expression or identity is different from that traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

2.7 MEPA College will respect the confidentiality of those seeking gender reassignment and will provide a supportive environment within the community.

2.8 MEPA College is opposed to all forms of prejudice and recognises that children and young people who experience any form of prejudice-related discrimination may fare less well in the education system.

2.9 MEPA College will ensure that all staff comply with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations.

2.10 MEPA College's Admissions Policy will not discriminate against any protected characteristic in any way.

MEPA College will:

Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities, given necessary training and support, and report progress to the Principal;

Ensure that the recording and reporting of equality and diversity is sufficiently scrutinised;

Foster positive attitudes and relationships, a shared sense of cohesion and belonging, and ensure this is promoted in our policies, procedures and activities;

Observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development, and ensure that all policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees regardless of any protected characteristic, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity;

Reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist;

Engage with a range of groups and individuals to ensure that those who are affected by a policy, procedure or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones;

Ensure that policies, procedures and activities benefit society, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in the public life of everyone, regardless of any protected characteristic;

Ensure staff promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the school, challenging inappropriate language and behaviour, responding appropriately to incidents of discrimination and harassment, and showing appropriate support for students with additional needs, maintaining a good level of awareness of issues surrounding equality.

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **3.1 The Principal/SMT will:**

- Ensure that MEPA College complies with the appropriate equality legislation and regulations;
- Meet its obligations under the PSED to publish equality objectives at least every four years commencing on the date of the last publication. Equality Policy Page 5 of 8
- Ensure that MEPA College's policies and procedures are developed and implemented with appropriate equality impact assessments informing future plans;
- Ensure that the MEPA College's Admissions Policy does not discriminate in any way;
- Ensure equal opportunities in its staff recruitment and promotion practices, professional development programmes;
- Proactively recruit high-quality applicants from under-represented groups;
- Provide information in appropriate and accessible formats;
- Ensure that the necessary disciplinary measures are in place to enforce this policy.

#### **3.2 MEPA College's Principal and SMT will:**

- Implement this policy and its procedures;
- Ensure that all staff members receive the appropriate equality and diversity training as part of their induction and CPD;
- Ensure that all parents, visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the provisions of this policy;
- Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any case of discriminatory practice;
- Address any reported incidents of harassment or bullying in line with DfE guidance;

#### **3.3 Employees will:**

- Be mindful of any incidents of harassment or bullying in MEPA College;
- Address any minor issues of harassment or bullying and report any major breaches of the policy accordingly;
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping within the curriculum and MEPA College's culture;
- Promote equality and good relations, and not harass or discriminate in any way;
- Monitor students' progress and academic needs to ensure the appropriate support is in place;
- Keep up to date with equality legislation and its application by attending the appropriate training.

#### **3.4 Students will:**

- Not discriminate or harass any other student or staff member;
- Actively encourage equality and diversity in MEPA College by contributing their cultural experiences and values;
- Report any incidences of bullying or harassment, whether to themselves or to others, to the class teacher or equivalent member of staff;
- Abide by all MEPA College's equality and diversity policies, procedures and codes.

3.5 The Trust will have an equality policy on its website, to demonstrate how it is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010, and advancing equality of opportunity.

#### **4. Equality objectives**

4.1 MEPA College is committed to promoting the welfare and equality of all its staff, pupils and other members of the college community. To achieve this, MEPA College has established the following objectives:

- Monitor changes to the curriculum to ensure they result in good for students in all vulnerable groups, and to review the curriculum;
- Improve the quality of support for students in all vulnerable groups both in and outside the class;
- Continue to explore the use of new technologies to support students in all vulnerable groups in accessing their learning. With special investigation taking place regarding the use of technology, internal exams and group work.

4.2 MEPA College will update all published equality documentation annually and will publish its objectives at least every four years.

#### **5. Collecting and using information**

5.1 MEPA College will collect equality information for the purpose of:

- Identifying key issues, e.g. unlawful discrimination in teaching methods;
- Assessing performance, e.g. benchmarking against similar organisations locally or nationally;
- Taking action, e.g. adapting working practice to accommodate the needs of staff who share protected characteristics.

5.2 MEPA College will build an equality profile for staff to assist with identifying any issues within their recruitment regime. MEPA College will obtain the following information from their staff:

- Recruitment and promotion;
- Numbers of part-time and full-time staff;
- Pay and remuneration;
- Training;
- Return to work of women on maternity leave;
- Return to work of disabled employees following sick leave relating to their disabilities;
- Grievances (including about harassment);
- Disciplinary action (including for harassment);
- Dismissals and other reasons for leaving.

5.3 MEPA College will use the information they obtain to analyse any gaps present in their equality documentary, including the Equal Opportunities Policy.

5.4 Any personal data MEPA College collects will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

#### **6. Publishing information**

6.2 The Trust will publish information relating to persons within MEPA College's community who share relevant protected characteristics, these will include:

- Other persons affected by MEPA College's policies and procedures.

6.3 MEPA College will not provide this information if:

- The employee is employed under contract personally to do work;
- The employer does not have, and it is not reasonably practicable for the employer to obtain the data;

## **7. Promoting equality**

7.1 In order to meet our objectives, MEPA College has identified the following priorities:

- MEPA College will ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly;
- There will be a clearly defined disciplinary system stipulated in the Behavioural Policy, which will be consistently enforced;
- Mepa Academy will seek the views of advisory staff, outside agencies and local schools;
- Throughout the year, MEPA College will plan ongoing events to raise awareness of equality and diversity.

7.2 Bullying and prejudice will be carefully monitored and dealt with accordingly.

7.3 Annual safeguarding training will be given to both existing and new staff to ensure that they are aware of the process for reporting and following up incidents of prejudice-related bullying.

## **8. Addressing prejudice-related incidents**

8.1 MEPA College is opposed to all forms of prejudice, and we recognise that students and staff who experience any form of prejudice-related discrimination may fare less well in the education system.

8.2 MEPA College will ensure that students and staff are aware of the impact of prejudice in order to prevent any incidents from occurring.

8.3 If incidents continue to occur, MEPA College will address them immediately.

## **9. Appeal process**

9.1 Staff members retain the right to appeal against a decision on the acceptability of their appearance e.g. dress code, using the MEPA College's grievance procedure.

9.2 MEPA College will adhere to the Complaints Procedures Policy when following the grievance procedure.

## **10. Curriculum**

10.1 All students will be entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum and to teaching and learning opportunities which meet their needs, including extra support where this has been identified as a statutory need.

10.2 When planning the curriculum, the college will take every opportunity to promote and advance equality.

10.3 When teaching the curriculum, the college will promote equality and will not subject individuals to discrimination.

10.4 MEPA College will develop an appropriate curriculum for all college in all vulnerable groups.

## **11. Monitoring and review**

11.1 MEPA College SMT will review this policy annually, to ensure that all procedures are up to date.

11.2 The policy will be monitored and evaluated by MEPA College SMT in the following ways:

- Individual attainment data (where necessary);
- Equal opportunities recruitment data;
- Ofsted / CDMT inspection judgements on equality and diversity;

- Incident records related to harassment and bullying.

11.3 Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff.