



APEX EDUCATION ALTERNATIVE PROVISION EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

Policy approved by: **Directors**

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1. Introduction

Apex Education is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all, and to ensuring that no individual is discriminated against in the planning and delivery of any of our activities. We therefore aim to ensure that the values of equality, diversity, and respect for all are embedded into everything that we do. Our Vision is a society where everyone has equitable access to an education that meets their individual needs. In terms of our service, we endeavour to ensure that it is accessible to all and will proactively seek to address any gaps we identify in communities and groups accessing our services, where possible.

2. About Our Policy

This policy is intended to demonstrate Apex Education's commitment to eliminating discrimination and encouraging and valuing diversity among staff, volunteers, partners, suppliers and users of our services. We recognise our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to meeting them in full. We believe that a culture that embraces equality, and values diversity, will help us to ensure that everyone feels involved and included in our plans, programmes and activities. We aim to create an environment which respects and welcomes everyone, and in which no form of bullying, harassment, disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour is tolerated by anyone towards anyone. This particularly applies in relation to the 'protected characteristics' named in the Equality Act 2010: Age, disability, gender reassignment, income, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (as further detailed below).

3. Our Responsibilities

Apex Education understands that for equality to be achieved this policy needs to be made understandable to, and embraced by, staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners. All staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners have a responsibility to ensure that their own language and actions are consistent with the spirit as well as the contents of this policy. Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with Apex Education's Directors.

4. Our Commitments

Apex Education recognises that an Equality and Diversity Policy alone is not enough to ensure that equality and diversity are central to everything that we do. We will seek to create an environment in which diversity and the contributions of all staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners are recognised and valued in all that we do. In this way we hope to provide an example of good equality practice and promote community cohesion.

In implementing this policy we recognise that some people are unfamiliar with the ways in which discrimination and disadvantage affect people's health, wellbeing and quality of life. We will therefore support people to develop equalities awareness and understanding.

To ensure that we are meeting the aims and the spirit of this policy we will:

- discuss and review how well we are implementing this policy, and adjust our practices/develop an action plan where necessary;
- assess any significant new or revised policies and procedures for their impact on equality;
- embed equality and diversity into our development plans;
- ensure our staff receive training in equality and diversity principles;
- ensure our employment practices and procedures are consistent with the aims of this policy.

5. Working With Contractors, Suppliers and Partners

It is important to us that suppliers, contractors and any other individual or organisation working on behalf of Apex Education are aware of and agree to comply with our Equality and Diversity policy whilst working for or on our behalf.

In addition, we are committed to:

- using accessible venues for events and meetings wherever it is possible to do so without affecting our overall service to our clients;
- using plain English, and offering accessible communications, for example, emails, letters, reports and publicity materials as far as it is within our means to do so.

6. Recruitment

Our recruitment, selection and appointment procedures ensure that people are chosen on their merits and abilities. Due value and consideration is given to the informal skills and experience (to be specified in job descriptions) of applicants as well as formal qualifications and training. We will advertise and select staff in a manner that meets objective job requirements and promotes equality of opportunity. Apex Education respects family and other personal commitments through supporting flexible working, conducive to supporting a healthy work-life balance.

7. Our Service

Apex Education works to provide access to its service for people who might want to benefit from it. We endeavour to work with our partners to meet specific needs and overcome barriers to access.

All general publicity about services offered is aimed at the widest possible audience within the localities where APex Education works.

This does not prevent Apex Education directing publicity at certain target groups within the communities, if it thinks that it is justified because the groups appear under-represented among its participants.

Apex Education collates information on the make-up of communities, user groups, staff and volunteers in order to ensure that we meet the aims of our Equality & Diversity Policy.

We monitor the age, gender and ethnicity of its volunteers and staff, and anyone who expresses an interest in any of these roles. As a result of this monitoring process, recruitment can be targeted where necessary towards any groups in the community who are shown not to be adequately represented on the bodies of volunteers and staff.

8. Protected Characteristics

These are taken from the Equality Act 2010 and Explanatory Notes to the Equality Act 2010

Age: An age group includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages. Where people fall in the same age group they share the protected characteristic of age. An age group would include “over fifties” or twenty-one-year-olds. A person aged twenty-one does not share the same characteristic of age with “people in their forties”. However, a person aged twenty-one and people in their forties can share the characteristic of being in the “under fifty” age range. (Note: Apex Education may administer projects or services aimed at specific age groups. This is not intended to exclude those outside that specific age group; but to aid in researching and providing effective help to specific groups of beneficiaries)

Disability: A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This section replaces similar provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and provisions in secondary legislation made under that Act.

Gender Reassignment: A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Marriage and civil partnership: A person has the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership if the person is married or is a civil partner.

- A person who is engaged to be married is not married and therefore does not have this protected characteristic.
- A divorcee or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved is not married or in a civil partnership and therefore does not have this protected characteristic.

Race: Race is defined as:

- a) Colour: includes being black or white.
- b) Nationality: includes being a British, Australian or Swiss citizen, etc.
- c) Ethnic or national origins: includes being from a Roma background or of Chinese heritage.

A racial group could be “black Britons” which would encompass those people who are both black and who are British citizens. This section replaces similar provisions in the Race Relations Act 1976. However, the power to add caste to the definition of race is a new provision.

Religion or Belief: Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion. A religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered to be a religion or belief, such as Protestants and Catholics within Christianity. A belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief. A “philosophical belief” must:

- Be genuinely held;
- Be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available;
- Be a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour;
- Attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance;
- Be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

Any cult involved in illegal activities is not covered. Beliefs such as humanism and atheism would be covered. This section replaces similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2010.

Sex:

- a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman;
- b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex.

*See Note below

Sexual orientation: is a person's sexual orientation towards:

- people of the same sex as him or her (in other words the person is a gay man or a lesbian)
- people of the opposite sex from him or her (the person is heterosexual)
- people of both sexes (the person is bisexual)

The definition is designed to replicate the effect of similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006.

*See Note below

*Note: Apex Education endeavours to recognise and respect the wide variety of sexual orientations that exist, and would include additional terms in the above. Such as;

- People of multiple sexes including non-binary genders (the person is pansexual)
- Lack of any sexual orientation (the person is asexual)
- Gender fluid (the person does not identify as one particular sex or other)
- Transgender (the person may have transitioned, or be in transition, from one sex to another, or identify as a different sex to that at birth)

9. Additional Discrimination

Apex Education seeks to also not discriminate on the grounds of mental health status or socio-economic status.)