

EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020 – 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 The equality strategy for South and City College Birmingham sets out our commitment and responsibilities for the next four years. It explains how we intend to continue to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations for all our stakeholders. South and City College Birmingham is ambitious for its students, staff, and local communities. In their most recent inspection, Ofsted recognised that: ‘Senior leaders and managers promote an inclusive culture. They accept all students, regardless of their starting points and provide them with good support to meet their goals and aspirations. The college is a welcoming environment and students from different backgrounds work well together. They treat each other with respect and are prepared well for living in modern Britain.’ Our strategy demonstrates commitment to go beyond compliance with equality legislation wherever possible and to strive towards demonstrating best practice in our approach to equality and diversity.

1.2 Policy Statement

The college celebrates and values the diversity brought to it by members of the college community and is committed to providing such services and support that enable all members of its community to achieve their full potential. The college aims to ensure that everyone is equally valued and treats one another with respect and dignity. We are seeking to provide a positive working and learning environment that is free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation and place equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of our business by demonstrating the following:

- Being proactive in our response to our equality duties
- Maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination
- Challenging inequality and discrimination
- Providing high quality responsive provision, services and support that meet the individual needs of staff, students, and service users
- Embracing and celebrating the diversity of our students, staff, and local communities
- Promoting equality and British Values in our policies, procedures, plans and practices
- Ensuring equality, diversity and British Values are successfully embedded within teaching and learning to further develop learners’ appreciation and understanding.’
- Making every effort to ensure that our student body and workforce reflect the diverse communities of Birmingham and beyond
- Involving staff, students, and service users in securing improvements to our programmes, services and learning and work environment
- Providing an environment where difference is respected, and it is safe to disclose equality information relating to protected characteristics
- Providing professional development opportunities that ensure staff have the skills and confidence to respond effectively to the aims of the Equality Act
- Creating an environment where staff and students are willing to disclose protected characteristics for monitoring purposes
- Providing a physical environment to meet the needs of students, including making reasonable adjustments for specific needs of individuals.

2 College Strategic Priorities

2.1 Continuing to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do is one of the College’s strategic objectives.

2.2 This objective is embedded in our Equality Objectives, which are listed below:

- Continue to narrow the achievement gaps in attainment for students, across all protected characteristics and none
- Take every opportunity to foster a culture of dignity, respect, and inclusion across the whole college community
- Maximise opportunities to develop understanding, and celebration of equality, diversity, and inclusion both within teaching, learning, assessment and beyond the classroom to all aspects of college life
- Develop the capacity of each College team to embed equality and diversity, distinctly and within specified areas.

2.3 The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the college complies with equality legislation in adopting a pro-active approach to mainstreaming equality into all decisions and activities. This will ensure that all staff and students are valued for the skills, attributes, and experiences that they bring and that the college works towards removing barriers that prevent staff and students from fulfilling their potential.

3 Equality Duties

3.1 When carrying out functions, all public sector organisations have a statutory duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 which sets out a general duty, supplemented by specific duties and regulations.

3.1.2 The General Duty

The general duty is set out in section 149 Equality Act and states, “A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this 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.”

3.1.3 The General Duty consists of three individual parts. The first part which focuses on having due regard to eliminate discrimination applies to **all** of the protected characteristics, namely: age, gender, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, ethnic origin, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three main aims encompassed by the duty as part of the decision-making process. We will comply with this duty by conducting equality analysis activity that includes stakeholder feedback and ensures college functions are represented. This activity will be monitored by the SLT member in charge of equality and diversity.

3.1.4 The second and third aims are limited in their scope to having **due regard** to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not. For these purposes marriage and civil partnership is not a relevant protected characteristic, therefore these parts of the duty do not extend to marriage or civil partnership.

3.1.5 Having due regard to advancing equality of opportunity will include us taking action to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic. We will comply with this by ensuring equality analysis activity is embedded across college functions and will monitor compliance through the self-assessment and quality audit process. We will include in the analysis the extended protected characteristics religion and belief and sexual orientation, where appropriate, so that we are able to identify our progress clearly
- Where a need is identified, we will take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of those who do not share it
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low
- Ensure our service provision extends to the needs of all those with protected characteristics
- Set and monitor equality objectives to improve our equality practice.

3.1.6 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations:

We will comply with this by ensuring the equality analysis process includes attention to this aspect. We will consider ways of developing understanding between people from different groups as a way of eliminating prejudice and, where deemed appropriate, we will treat some people more favourably than others. The college has an annual programme to celebrate a range of cultural and religious events. A comprehensive programme of training for all staff is prepared annually

Specific Duties

3.1.7 As with former equality duties, the general public sector equality duty is underpinned by specific duties set out in regulations which are intended to operate as a means of better performance of the general duty. The focus is now more on outcomes than process.

3.1.8 The 'specific duties' are set out in the Equality Act 2010. The regulations came into force on 10 September 2011.

- Public bodies listed in the Regulations should publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty by 31 January 2012
- Public bodies listed in the regulations should set themselves equality objectives from 6 April 2012 onwards.

3.1.9 We comply with this duty by publishing an annual equalities report which sets out clearly the impact of our service provision, policies, and procedures across a broad range of college functions. We also publish the outcomes of our equality analyses annually.

4 Collecting Equality Information

4.1 Engagement Activity

4.1.1 Engagement activity is critical to the success of an equality strategy. We will continue to consult with stakeholders on our policies, practices and procedures and will regularly seek feedback. We have improved our practice and now have an effective learner voice strategy that includes representation of people with protected characteristics. We hold targeted focus groups when necessary to capture the views and feedback from those whose voice may not be easily captured through formal processes. These include groups for those with mental health difficulties and learning difficulties.

4.2 Equality Analysis

- 4.2.1 Equality analysis is a way of considering the effect on different groups protected from discrimination by the Equality Act. We recognise the need to consider if there are any unintended consequences for some groups, and also to consider if the function or policy will be fully effective for all target groups. We use equality information, and the results of engagement activity with protected groups and others, to understand the actual effect or the potential effect of our functions, policies or decisions. This helps us to identify practical steps to tackle any negative effects such as discrimination, and to ensure that we are being proactive in advancing equality opportunity and the fostering of good relations. Equality analysis will be conducted across all college functions and will be monitored by the SLT member in charge of equality and diversity.
- 4.2.2 The SLT member responsible for Equality and Diversity will ensure the register of policies and procedures incorporates the recording of equality analysis and their outcomes. Training will continue to be provided for managers involved to ensure a consistent approach is maintained across the college.

5 Monitoring & Evaluation

- 5.1 An Annual Equalities Report is produced and published on the college's website in line with the Public Sector specific duty. This includes information about the effects of college policies, practices and procedures on people with protected characteristics. Information relating to staff, students and other stakeholders will be addressed. The report includes progress made in meeting equality objectives. The annual equalities report is monitored by the Equality & Diversity Committee and reported to the SLT and the college's governing body annually.
- 5.2 The self-assessment process includes monitoring and evaluation of college functions and includes some attention to equality analysis. A key objective will be to improve the way in which we record and monitor equality information in future. We believe the parameters of current legislation provide a useful framework within which to develop good practice. Current monitoring and reporting is undertaken in respect of age, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability, and religion in the following areas:

5.2.1 Students

- learner enrolment
- achievement and progression
- withdrawals
- additional learner support
- access to student enrichment activities
- disciplinary action, including incidents of harassment and bullying
- complaints

5.2.2 Staff

- employee numbers
- grade and category of staff including full and part-time status
- applications for appointment
- shortlisted candidates
- appointments and promotions
- type of contract (permanent, fixed term)
- employee relations – grievance, disciplinary, harassment, capability, complaints
- leavers

- training and staff development opportunities
- requests for flexible working
- return rates from maternity leave and the roles to which staff return
- pay levels

5.3 Collected data will be used to inform management decisions and the review of policies and practices within the college and also within the strategic and business planning processes. It will also be reported upon within various college management meetings through to Senior Leadership Group and the Corporation.

6 Status & Review

6.1 This Equality Strategy is approved by the Corporation. Students, trade unions and staff are consulted as part of the process.

6.2 The strategy will apply for the period 2020 – 2024. Objectives will be set and published in compliance with the Equality Act, public sector and will be monitored on a regular basis in accordance with legislative developments and the need for good practice.