



# EQUALITY POLICY, OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN 2026 – 2030

Approved by:		
<b>Name:</b>	Matthew Dixon	Mark Davis
<b>Position:</b>	Headteacher	Chair of Governors
<b>Signed:</b>	M.Dixon	M.Davis
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KAHSC v3 – January 2026

<sup>1</sup>The Governing Body/Academy Trust are free to delegate approval of this document to a Committee of the Governing Body, an individual Governor or the Head Teacher.

<sup>2</sup>Policy should be reviewed annually with objectives reviewed and republished every 4 years.

## REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Version Description</b>	<b>Date of Revision/Reviewed</b>
1	Original	Sept 2023
2	Minor updates to include information on sexual and other forms of harassment and minor formatting	Nov 2024
3	Minor additions and updates to terminology.	Jan 2026

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## 1. Introduction

Our school is inclusive; we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and we are committed to ensuring all members of our community are equally valued.

Equality legislation exists to protect people but also to try and advance equality. Inequality still persists in the UK despite 40 years of equality legislation. In Cumbria we know that some groups do less well than others in terms of progress, achievement and later life chances. This picture is reflected nationally. The recognition of diversity and promotion of inclusive and equality practices will help to overcome this disparity.

Our school seeks to foster a warm, welcoming and respectful environment which allows us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

We recognise that there are similarities and differences between individuals and groups but we will strive to ensure that our differences do not become barriers to participation, access and learning and to create inclusive processes and practices, where the varying needs of individuals and groups are identified and met. We therefore cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the [UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities](#), and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).

**Our approach to equality is based on 7 key principles:**

1. **All learners are of equal value.** Whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.
2. **We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength.** We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity (protected characteristics). We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
3. **We foster positive attitudes and relationships.** We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other. We are also committed to supporting our staff in the practical implementation of this Policy.
4. **We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.** We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
5. **We observe good equality practices for our staff.** We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
6. **We have the highest expectations of all our children.** We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential.
7. **We work to raise standards for all pupils, but especially for the most vulnerable.** We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole school.

## 2. Purpose of the Policy

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against pupils, staff or the wider school community or treat them less favourably because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity.

Age and marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” and although are not part of the school provisions related to pupils, would apply to staff and the wider school community.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools, to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and two specific duties:

**The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty”.** This requires all public organisations, including schools, to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups;
- foster good relations between different groups.

**Two “specific duties”.** This requires all public organisations, including schools, to:

1. publish information (the Policy) to show compliance with the Equality Duty;
2. publish equality objectives at least every 4 years which are specific and measurable.

This Policy describes how our school, which has very limited resources, is meeting these statutory duties and working hard to ensure that equality is at the core of all that we do. This document is supported by our Equality Objectives Action Plan which demonstrates how we intend to ensure that principles of equality are embedded into our school and community life.

We utilise a PSED checklist for school staff and governors to help assess the school’s compliance with our PSED duties. Further information on how the Equality Act applies to schools can be found in the Department for Education (DfE) document [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#).

## 3. Links to other policies and documentation

Although this Policy is the key document for information about our approach to equality in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, evidence of our commitment to our responsibilities under the Equality Act can also be found in our:

- Accessibility Plan
- Admissions procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- Governing body minutes
- Parent and pupil surveys
- Child Protection Policy and procedures
- Code of conduct for staff and other adults
- School performance data
- School website and newsletters
- Self-evaluation reviews
- SEND Policy
- School development plans

As a school we also collect the following information, broken down by race, religion or belief, sex, disability and, where relevant, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and age:

- School admissions
- Pupil attainment and progress
- Prejudice-related incidents

- Sanctions (including suspension and exclusion)
- Staff recruitment and selection
- Promotions
- Professional development opportunities

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the ways in which we comply with this are found in our Recruitment and Selection procedures.

#### 4. Our school profile

Bewcastle School is a Community School with 19 pupils currently enrolled and a strong ethos of inclusivity aimed at developing the whole child. There is a ratio of 11 boys to 8 girls, (a ratio of 58 boys to 42 girls) well above the national ratio of 52 boys to 48 girls (DfE June 2025). 32% of pupils take free school meals (FSM), slightly above the national average of 25.7% (DfE June 2025).

25% of our pupils in Reception to Year 6 have special educational needs with 19% on SEN Support and 6% have an EHCP – this is slightly higher than the national averages which are 19.5% combined, 14.2 SEN support and 5.3% EHCP.

Pupils enter our school from a range of settings, at the time of writing 25% of children in Reception to Year 6 had been previously home schooled. An additional 25% of children are “joiners” who had started at different schools. As a result, attainment and maturity is wide-ranging. To address this inequality, we have worked tirelessly to create an inclusive environment where all children feel safe and ready to learn. Having established a purposeful environment – all staff are now working hard to ensure children are challenged at an appropriate level and areas for development are identified and targeted.

Our catchment area takes in the hamlets of Bewcastle, Sleetbeck and Roadhead and isolated farms. There are very few amenities available locally. The immediate area is remote and isolated and faces particular challenges due to its geographical location – making the importance of the role of the school in the community vitally important. A 2019 study by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government which studied indicators of deprivation found Longtown and the Border (the area the school is located in) had the following characteristics. (Where the rank of 1 is the most deprived area and 32844 is the least deprived area):

- Ranked just outside the bottom 3rd of all areas (10,872) on the Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Ranked in the bottom half of all areas (14990) for Education, Skills and Training
- Ranked in the bottom 3% of all areas (892) for the Living Environment
- Ranked in the bottom 1% of all areas (160) for Barriers to Housing and Services

All pupils at the school are white British and the wider area has an extremely low level of diversity. 68% of our pupils come from outside our official catchment area. They are attracted by our school’s reputation and “family feel.”

We have several vulnerable groups including those with special educational, learning and medical needs. At present there is one child in school with a CIN plan. In the last 3 years there has been no fixed term or permanent exclusions or LADO referrals.

We have never had problems attracting staff and have a full teaching staff complement.

The Local Authority (LA) handles admissions to the school. When we are made aware of pupils who are joining the school with special educational needs or disabilities, we arrange to meet the pupil and parents or carers and involve professionals from the LA and Health Authority to ensure any adjustments required to our buildings or curriculum are made in readiness for them starting school. The school has fully ramped access and is level throughout the building enabling access to wheelchair users. Our reception area is accessible to people with disabilities and we have access to a hearing loop for those with impaired hearing. We have one disabled toilet which also contains an adjustable changing bed for use by those pupils who need personal care whilst at school.

None of our pupils have English as an additional language.

Information for parents and others is provided in verbal and written form and we offer it in alternative formats on request e.g. another language, braille etc.

Recruitment procedures are based on those provided by our LA with all advertising being processed through the Council HR and Advertising Team.

**Note: If we do not provide actual figures in relation to pupils or staff from ethnic minorities or any other equality group with protected characteristics it is because they are a small number of people and we must maintain their privacy. We are also not required to collect any statistical data which we do not already collect routinely e.g. RAISE online and other data.**

## **5. What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our pupils and the way we provide access for pupils to facilities and services.
- We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled pupils – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.
- The Head teacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this Policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
- We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
- Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.
- We carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all new policies, practices, events and decision-making processes to ensure that they are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.
- We challenge all forms of prejudice and prejudice based bullying.

### **Behaviour, exclusions and attendance**

The school policies on behaviour and attendance take full account of our duties under the Equality Act. We make reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for pupils with a disability. We closely monitor data on exclusions and absence from school for evidence of overrepresentation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

### **Addressing prejudice and discriminatory-based bullying**

The school challenges all forms of prejudice and discriminatory-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality, including:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs.
- prejudices around race, religion or beliefs.
- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation.

## **6. What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity between different pupil groups**

- We know the needs of our school population very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age-appropriate literacy and number skills. We also ensure children from all groups are challenged to reach higher levels.
- We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our pupil admissions meetings.
- We collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups.
- We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all pupils.

- We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.
- Our school has an accessibility plan that is reviewed every 3 years or when a significant change has taken place. The Plan is published on the school website.
- We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of pupils with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the school's Equality Objectives.

## **7. What we are doing to foster good relations**

- We prepare our pupils for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender identity, sexuality, disability and avoiding stereotyping.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice-based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people.
- We provide opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of opinions and sympathise with different experiences.
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors and whole school events.

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equality meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- review relevant feedback from the annual parent questionnaire, parents' evening, parent-school forum and/or focus meetings or governors' parent-consultation meeting.
- secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events.
- review feedback and responses from the children and groups of children from the School Council.
- ensure that we secure responses and feedback at Governing Body meetings.

## **8. Publishing equality information and objectives**

We identify and publish equality objectives on a four-year cycle. The objectives are reviewed each year by the school's Governors and Headteacher and are available on our website. We are happy to provide our equality objectives in other formats if requested.

We have a template for publishing school equality objectives on our website and use guidance on writing equality objectives to ensure that our objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

In line with DfE guidance on what we must or should publish on the school website, we will consider collecting and publishing governing board members' diversity data so that such information is widely accessible to members of the school community and the public.

## **9. Roles and responsibilities**

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equality and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

## **Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation; that this Policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented and form part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP); support is provided to the Head teacher in implementing any actions necessary. The Governing Body will receive and attend training in order to successfully discharge their duties under the legislation.

Every governing body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Equality objectives are set every four years by the Governing Body. The Governing Body assess the success in reaching the objectives annually.

## **Headteacher**

The Head teacher is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; developing partnerships with external agencies regarding the Policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available; ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are conducted on functions and Policies; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

A senior member of staff has day-to-day responsibility for co-coordinating implementation of the Policy and for monitoring outcomes.

## **Teaching and support staff**

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom;
- challenge prejudice and discrimination;
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur;
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability;
- maintain the highest expectations of success for all pupils;
- support different groups of pupils in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult;
- keep up to date with equality legislation relevant to their work.

We will provide training and guidance on equality for all staff in our Code of Conduct. This is reviewed annually and introduced to staff at the start of the year. The Code of Conduct is introduced to all new members of staff.

## **Pupils**

Pupils are expected, and will be supported, to:

- be involved in the development of the Policy to help them understand how it relates to them in an age or ability appropriate way;
- act in accordance with any relevant part of the Policy;
- experience a curriculum and environment which is respectful of diversity and difference and prepares them well for life in a diverse society;
- understand the importance of reporting discriminatory bullying and racially motivated incidents;
- help us ensure our peer support programme promotes understanding and supports pupils who are experiencing discrimination.

## **Visitors**

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers, are expected to support our commitment to equality and comply with the duties set out in this Policy. We will provide guidance and information to enable them to do this. Information will be placed on the school website and on parent information boards.

## **10. Equal opportunities for staff**

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff. We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.

- All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law.
- We are also concerned to ensure, wherever possible, that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.
- As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.
- We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.
- We ensure that all staff, including support, administrative staff, and others employed on a regular basis by external organisations, receive appropriate training and, where applicable, opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

## **11. Monitoring and reviewing the Policy**

We update and re-publish our Equality Policy as necessary, our school profile and objectives annually to account for the September intake or staffing changes and how they affect diversity in school, and the action plan no less than every 4 years. We will also review our action plan in brief annually in light of any new objectives to ensure our longer-term goals remain relevant.

## **12. Disseminating the Policy**

This Equality Policy, along with the Equality Objectives and related information, is available:

- on the school website.
- as paper copies in the school office.
- Code of Conduct.
- on display for visitors, including parents and carers.

We publish copies of relevant Policies and guidance, including those on behaviour, admissions and special educational needs, on our school website.

## **13. Complaints**

Complaints arising from the operation of this Policy will be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure.

Complaints by staff will be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure, as appropriate.

We take all complaints seriously and will take appropriate action to eliminate discriminatory behaviour.

We will monitor complaints to help establish whether we are meeting our equality duties and report regularly to the Governing Body about the nature of complaints made and action taken.

## **EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 1** – Equality of Opportunity/Fostering Good Relations

To ensure **all** children that attend Bewcastle School have equal opportunity to access extra-curricular activities provided by the school and external providers

### **Why we have chosen this objective:**

We have analysed the engagement of pupils at after -school clubs and found it was variable. Uptake for some clubs such as Creation Mill (Craft Club) was almost universal with a good gender split (78% of boys and 100% of girls that were eligible attended.) However due to its geographical location very few children were able to attend clubs outside of school. When surveyed it was found that 86% of the KS2 boys didn't attend any clubs outside of school other than swimming lessons.

Bewcastle is in an area of rural isolation – the nearest towns are Brampton (Pop 4000) are Longtown (Pop 2500) which are 13 and 14 miles away respectively. The nearest city is Carlisle which is 20 miles and a 45-minute drive away. The local area is ranked in the bottom 1% nationally for barriers to services.

### **To achieve this objective, we plan to:**

Raise the percentage of children accessing extra- curricular activities by.

Contact external providers and clubs to explore the possibility of the school hosting events to:

- promote the group
- encourage Bewcastle children to take part either in the school-based events or at the club's base

Contact the following clubs : Walton YFC, Stick dressing, Langholm Fishing Club, Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling, Carpet Bowling (Stapleton) and Rock UK

### **Progress we are making towards achieving this objective:**

## **EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 2** – Fostering good relations/ eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation

To improve knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable pupils to appreciate and value difference and diversity, e.g. increasing understanding between pupils from different cultures.

### **Why we have chosen this objective:**

The area in which the school is located (Longtown) has very limited diversity. It is 99.1% white British compared with 81.7% nationally. In addition to this the proportion of Asians in the area is extremely low 0.2% compared to 9.3% nationally.

2 schools locally have reported extremely offensive reactions to their children being taken to visit a mosque – this demonstrates

### **To achieve this objective, we plan to:**

Use of the 'anti-racist' framework from the NEU to review current provision in relation to inclusion of children from all backgrounds, race and culture and use this to identify actions

Review current PHSE lessons and other curriculum opportunities

Explicitly teaching about and challenging use of careless racist words.

School Diversity walks throughout the year to capture pupil voice and school environments.

Highlight Anti- bullying week.

Follow the 8 actions that are laid out by Anti- Racism Cumbria to develop more intentional anti-racist actions – Use these to ensure the action plan is SMART.

**Progress we are making towards achieving this objective:**

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