





First **Star** Scholars **UK**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Date of Last Review	23/09/2024
Review Cycle	Annually
Date (Month/Year) of Next Review	09/2025
Date Policy was Ratified	23/09/2024
Named Lead for Writing/Review	Emily Hollis MBE
Signed: CEO  FSSUK Board of Trustees – Chair 	Date 23/09/24

Introduction

First Star Scholars UK is dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture amongst the whole workforce.

The charity is committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The charity is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, service users and job applicants as per the Equality Act 2010. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

We do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each employee/volunteer to feel respected and able to give their best.

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat clients, service users, suppliers, members of the public and former staff members.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

This policy has been implemented following consultation with the board of trustees.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

1. Provide equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employment, whether voluntary, permanent, temporary, part-time or full-time
2. Not unlawfully discriminate protected characteristics of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:

- pay and benefits
- terms and conditions of employment
- dealing with grievances and discipline
- dismissal
- redundancy
- leave for parents/carers
- requests for flexible working
- selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and all external stakeholders and service users, and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

Legal Status of this Policy

This policy complies with our legal duties under:

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty)
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

Equality Duty

The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

These are often referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Our Commitments

The organisation commits to:

1. Encourage equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.
2. Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

3. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees/volunteers, clients, service users, suppliers, the public and any others in the course of the organisation’s work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation’s grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Furthermore, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

4. Make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
5. Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
6. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
7. Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Equality Objectives

First Star Scholars UK’s Equality Objectives 2024-2027:

Objective	Actions
To ensure that looked after young people have the academic success, life skills and adult support needed to successfully transition to higher education and adulthood	Ensure that looked after children across all regions of the UK have access to our programme by developing a pupil premium funded model and sharing this with all schools, virtual schools and universities.
Analyse recruitment data and trends in regard to race, disability and any gender	Review current staff data and report on this to the board.

pay gap and report on this to the governing board	Create a strategy of inclusive recruitment and workplace diversity. Ensure blind hiring. Ensure diversity training. Broaden recruitment channels.
Promote fairness, equality and cultural understanding	Embed into the curriculum programme. Include cultural events and dates of significance in online sessions and university residentials.
Improve staff awareness	Provide appropriate CPD opportunities. Provide training opportunities suited to employee's roles. Ensure safer recruitment and compliance when recruiting. Undertake staff meetings and briefings where equality, inclusion and fairness are discussed. Provide all staff with access to all relevant, up to date policies, ensuring that they read and understand said policies.

Agreement

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the board of trustees and senior management and has been agreed with employee representatives and ratified by the board of trustees.

Policy Responsibilities

Our trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the CEO.

All senior leaders must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example, and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Staff will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

If you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the CEO [to request training or further information].

Recruitment and Selection

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any protected characteristic. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are

treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Shortlisting of applicants should be done by more than one person wherever possible.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. They should include an appropriate short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about vacancies.

We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in our organisation. Where appropriate, Human Resources (trustee lead) may approve the use of lawful exemptions to recruit someone with a particular protected characteristic. The advertisement should specify the exemption that applies.

Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with Human Resources (trustee lead) approval. For example:

- i. Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- ii. Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- iii. Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- iv. Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision making process).

Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of Human Resources (trustee lead), who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment, or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Staff Training, Promotion and Conditions of Service

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

Disability Discrimination

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact the CEO to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The CEO may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of premises we use to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff.

Fixed Term Employees and Agency Workers

We monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion, and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Part Time Work

We monitor the conditions of service of part time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy.

Termination of Employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal, or other disciplinary action.

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in our associated policies. This includes with whom an employee/volunteer should raise a grievance – usually their line manager.

Use of the organisation's grievance or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal (subject to meeting the criteria) within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Breaches of this Policy

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our grievance procedure. If you need advice on how to proceed you should speak to the CEO.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by the CEO and board of trustees in consultation with any other employees/volunteers as appropriate. Recommendations for change should be reported to the CEO.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. As part of this process we monitor the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of our staff.

Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the CEO.

Version Control - Approval and Review

Version No.	Approved by	Approval Date	Main Change	Review Period
1.0	Diarmuid Molloy	23 September 2024	New policy format approved	Annually