Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures

Effective Date: April 2026

Review Date: April 2027

Policy Statement

At Life Journey Academy, we are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work as an Alternative Provision delivering outreach mentoring in schools and community settings. We believe that every individual, whether a staff member, child, young person, adult, volunteer, or stakeholder has the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, regardless of their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) or any other characteristic.

Our mission is to empower children, young people, and adults, particularly those with SEND, SEMH needs, or neurodivergent profiles, or those facing barriers to education and everyday life. We aim to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between diverse groups, in line with our legal obligations and our values of compassion, respect, and empowerment.

Purpose

1. **Prevent Discrimination:** Ensure no individual is unfairly treated due to their protected characteristics or other factors such as socio-economic background or educational needs.
2. **Promote Equality of Opportunity:** Provide tailored support to ensure all children, young people, adults and staff can access opportunities, particularly those with SEN or EHCPs.
3. **Foster Inclusion:** Create a welcoming environment where diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences are valued and celebrated.

4. **Comply with Legislation:** Meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and related guidance, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (in line with relevant equality expectations associated with publicly funded services where applicable).
5. **Embed Diversity in Practice:** Ensure our programmes, resources, and activities reflect and respect the diverse communities we serve.

Legal Framework

This policy complies with:

- **Equality Act 2010**: Prohibits discrimination (direct, indirect, harassment, or victimisation) based on protected characteristics.
- **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**: Requires public bodies (and relevant organisations delivering publicly funded services) to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations.
- **SEND Code of Practice 2015**: Ensures support for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.
- **Human Rights Act 1998**: Upholds the right to fair treatment and respect for private life.
- **Education Act 1996**: Supports inclusive education provision.

Responsibilities

- **Lee Johnson** is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and ensuring compliance.
- **All Staff and Volunteers:** Must uphold equality and diversity principles, challenge discriminatory behaviour, and participate in relevant training.
- **Directors:** Ensure policies, resources, and mentoring practices align with equality objectives and review progress annually.
- **Stakeholders:** Encouraged to treat others with respect and report any concerns about discrimination.

Procedures

Recruitment and Employment

- **Objective:** Ensure fair and inclusive recruitment, retention, and development of staff and volunteers.
- **Actions:**
    - Job advertisements are accessible, use inclusive language, and are shared through diverse channels to attract a wide range of candidates.
    - Recruitment processes are transparent, with selection criteria based solely on skills and qualifications relevant to the role.
    - Reasonable adjustments are made for candidates and staff with disabilities (e.g., accessible interview formats, flexible working arrangements).
    - All staff receive equality and diversity training during induction and annually thereafter.
    - As LJA grows and engages additional staff or contractors, workforce diversity will be monitored to identify and address any underrepresentation, in line with UK GDPR.

Mentoring and Service Delivery

- **Objective:** Provide inclusive mentoring and support that meets the diverse needs of children, young people, and adults.
- **Actions:**
    - Conduct needs assessments for children, young people, or adults, particularly those with SEN or EHCPs, to tailor mentoring support (e.g., accessible materials, one-to-one sessions).
    - Use inclusive resources (e.g., materials reflecting diverse cultures, genders, and abilities) in mentoring sessions.
    - Ensure outreach venues (schools, community halls) are accessible, with adjustments (e.g., ramps, quiet spaces) coordinated with venue managers.
    - Engage with parents/guardians to understand the cultural, religious, or personal needs of children, young people, or adults, and incorporate them into mentoring plans.

- Regularly consult children, young people, or adults for feedback on inclusivity (e.g., through surveys or discussions).

Training and Awareness

- **Objective:** Equip staff and volunteers to promote equality and challenge discrimination.
- **Actions:**
  - Provide mandatory equality and diversity training, covering the Equality Act, unconscious bias, and cultural competence, within one month of joining and annually thereafter.
  - Offer specialised training for staff mentoring vulnerable groups (e.g., trauma-informed practice for children, young people or adults with behavioural needs).
  - Both directors reflect on inclusive practice as part of ongoing operational discussions and annual policy review.
  - Make equality and diversity information accessible to staff and learners in appropriate formats.

Handling Discrimination and Complaints

- **Objective:** Address any incidents of discrimination swiftly and fairly.
- **Actions:**
  - Follow Life Journey Academy's Complaints and Compliments Policy for handling discrimination-related complaints.
  - Encourage staff, children, young people or adults, or stakeholders to report discrimination, harassment, or bullying via:
    - Email: contact@ljacademy.co.uk
    - Phone: 07765802889
  - Investigate complaints within 5 working days, ensuring impartiality and confidentiality.
  - Take appropriate action, which may include mediation, disciplinary measures, or referral to external bodies (e.g., police for hate crimes).
  - For children, young people or adults, ensure age-appropriate support during the process (e.g., involving a trusted adult or advocate).

Monitoring and Review

- **Objective:** Continuously improve our equality and diversity practices.
- **Actions:**
    - Collect anonymised data on children, young people or adults and staff demographics (e.g., age, disability, ethnicity) to monitor participation and outcomes, in compliance with UK GDPR.
    - Review equality objectives annually, reporting progress to the directors and stakeholders.
    - Gather feedback from individuals receiving support, families, and commissioners on an ongoing basis as part of regular reviews, using this to inform equality and diversity practice.
    - Update this policy annually or sooner if significant changes occur (e.g., new legislation, programme expansion).

Partnership Working

- **Objective:** Collaborate with schools and community venues to uphold equality standards.
- **Actions:**
    - Request equality policies from host venues to ensure alignment with Life Journey Academy's standards.
    - Work with schools to support children, young people or adults with EHCPs, ensuring reasonable adjustments are implemented during mentoring sessions.
    - Engage with diverse community groups to promote mentoring opportunities and gather feedback on inclusivity.

Specific Considerations

- **Children, young people or adults with SEN/EHCPs:** We prioritise reasonable adjustments, such as sensory-friendly mentoring spaces or tailored communication methods, to ensure access to our programmes.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Mentoring sessions are planned with awareness of religious and cultural practices, including scheduling considerations and the use of culturally inclusive resources.
- **Outreach Settings:** Staff verify that external venues comply with accessibility requirements and have inclusive policies.
- **Vulnerable Groups:** Extra care is taken to support children, young people or adults who may face intersecting disadvantages (e.g., ethnic minority youth with disabilities).

Dealing with Breaches

- **Staff/Volunteers:** Breaches of this policy (e.g., discriminatory behaviour) may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in line with our HR policies.
- **Children, young people or adults:** Where an individual receiving support behaves in a way that is discriminatory or harmful toward others, this is addressed through a restorative, trauma-informed approach involving the individual, their family or carer, and the commissioning body where relevant.
- **External Partners:** Non-compliance by contractors or venues may lead to termination of partnerships.

Recording and Reporting Prejudicial Incidents

A prejudicial incident is any behaviour, language, or attitude directed at an individual or group that is rooted in prejudice against a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This includes racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, sexist, or religiously prejudiced language or behaviour, whether directed at a child, young person, adult, or member of staff.

All prejudicial incidents are taken seriously regardless of the age of the person involved or whether the behaviour appears intentional.

Recording

Where a prejudicial incident occurs during an LJA session, Lee Johnson records the incident in writing on the same day. The record includes: date and time, nature of the

incident, individuals involved, any witnesses, the immediate response, and any follow-up action planned.

Records are stored securely in line with LJA's Data Retention Policy.

Response

The response to a prejudicial incident is proportionate to the nature and severity of the behaviour. It is restorative where possible, trauma-informed, and focused on understanding and addressing the behaviour rather than simply punishing it. Where the incident raises a safeguarding concern, it is referred to the DSL and follows the referral pathway in the Safeguarding Policy.

Information sharing with the LA and home school

Where a prejudicial incident involves a child or young person placed by a school or local authority, the commissioning body is notified promptly, typically within 24 hours of the incident. A brief written record of the incident and the response is shared with the commissioning body as part of the regular session reporting or as a standalone notification where the incident is serious.

Monitoring and Reporting

- **Equality Lead:** Lee Johnson holds responsibility for equality and diversity oversight. Both directors review equality themes, feedback, and actions annually as part of the policy review process.
- **Annual Report:** Equality and diversity themes, feedback, and actions will be reviewed periodically.
- **Confidentiality:** All data collection and reporting comply with UK GDPR and our Privacy Policy.

Contact Information

For questions, feedback, or to report concerns related tuality and diversity, contact:

Directors: Lee Johnson and Natalia Krasnianska
Email: contact@ljacademy.co.uk
Phone: 07765802889