



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Approved by: Kelly-Ann Gordon - Principal

Purpose

This policy defines Eastern School of Performing Arts (ESPA) commitment to creating a community where belonging is felt by every student and colleague. Beyond our legal duty under the Equality Act 2010, we are united by shared values that celebrate diversity and nurture genuine connection across our organisation. Upholding an environment free from discrimination is a collective responsibility. We review this commitment annually, ensuring our culture evolves alongside our people and our principles.

Scope

This policy outlines our collective responsibility to champion shared values by rigorously challenging inequality, prejudice, and harassment in all forms. Through continuous training and inclusive representation, we ensure that every student, colleague, and stakeholder experiences equitable access and opportunity. This policy applies to all employees, students, visitors, contractors, and volunteers across the organisation. .

Policy Statement

ESPA is committed to its [Public Sector Equality Duty \(Equality Act 2010\)](#) and the [Worker Protection Act 2023](#), surpassing statutory obligations to lead in equity and inclusion. We foster a culture of belonging by proactively challenging direct and indirect discrimination, including aligning with the UK Government's [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#) and guidance from [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). In accordance with the Worker Protection Act, we take all reasonable steps to protect our workforce from harassment by any party, including third parties, while preparing for the evolving legislative landscape of the Employment Rights Bill.

Our curriculum and organisational life further reinforce Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural (SMSC) development and Fundamental British Values, empowering a diverse community where every individual can thrive. We are dedicated to the [SEND and Alternative Provision reforms](#), ensuring tailored support and inclusive practices remove barriers for learners with additional needs. By combining these standards with a commitment to a secure, thriving workforce, ESPA ensures that equity of opportunity is embedded in both our professional environment and our educational delivery.

Responsibilities

For ESPA to fully meet its commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, each member of the Organisation must take responsibility for following and supporting this policy.

The policy applies to all ESPA stakeholders, including students, employees, agents, employers, contractors, volunteers and visitors. Furthermore, all members of the ESPA community are expected to follow the commitment to promoting EDI across the Organisation..

To realise our commitment to EDI, those in different roles across the Organisation must understand their function in its success.

Related Documentation

HR002 - Code of Conduct and Ethics

HR013 - Dignity At Work – Policy & Procedure

HR008 - Grievance Policy and Procedure

HR004 - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

CQ002 - Assessment Policy

CQ001 - Appeals Policy

HR001 - Disclosure of Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Policy

EDI002 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

HR017 - Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy

STU004 - Student Positive Behaviour Policy

STU005 - Bullying and Harassment Policy

STU008 - Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy

STU009 - Dealing with Disclosure of Unspent Convictions Policy

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Commitment Statement

At Eastern School of Performing Arts, we are committed to fostering a culture where everyone feels seen, heard and valued. We celebrate the richness that diversity brings to our creative community and strive to ensure that all individuals — regardless of background, identity or experience — have equal access to opportunity, expression, and support. We pledge to actively challenge discrimination, break down barriers, and create inclusive spaces where every voice matters and every individual can thrive. Through education, empathy, and action, we will continue to build a learning environment that reflects and respects the diverse world we live in

Compliance with Legal Responsibilities

ESPA operates under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance opportunity, and nurture good relations. We protect all nine characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership.

We hold a zero-tolerance approach to:

- Direct & Indirect Discrimination (including by association or perception)
- Harassment & Victimisation
- Discrimination arising from disability and failure to make Reasonable Adjustments

Nurturing Connection Beyond Compliance

Our commitment to belonging extends to all who face barriers to education. We proactively forge connections with underrepresented groups to ensure education transforms lives, specifically supporting:

- Care-experienced learners and those with caring responsibilities
- Individuals facing socio-economic disadvantage or low-income barriers
- Speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Ex-offenders and those without formal qualifications
- Individuals with emotional, behavioural, or mental health challenges

Accountability & Transparency

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, ESPA ensures progress through:

- Annual Transparency: Publishing compliance and diversity data annually
- Measurable Objectives: Setting specific EDI targets every four years to drive our strategy forward and ensure our values are translated into action

To realise our commitment to EDI, those in different roles across the Organisation must understand their function in its success.

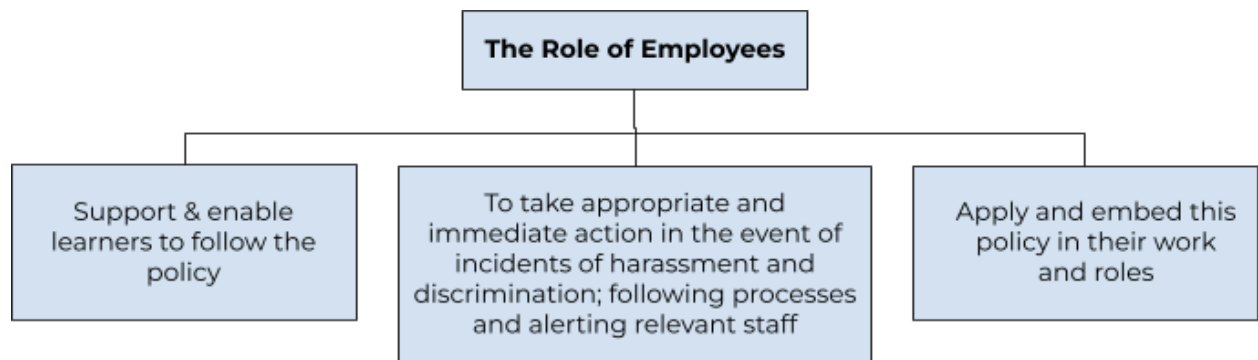
Principal

The Principal will:

- Maintain overall responsibility for the policy implementation, ensuring that necessary actions and staff training are executed to advance and embed equality across the Organisation
- Oversee the setting, implementation, and monitoring of equality objectives, impact measures, and action plans detailed within the Organisations strategy
- Ensure that EDI is mainstreamed into all activities, including overseeing the equality impact assessment process for new policies, procedures, and services

Employees

Each ESPA employee is responsible for supporting this policy and the law. Every role in the Organisation has an EDI component, and employees will:



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Code of Practice

EDI for Teaching & Learning

The Eastern School of Performing Arts (ESPA) is committed to inclusive learning and embedding EDI in all aspects of the curriculum. In doing so, we recognise that all students are individuals with individual learning styles and support needs. It will therefore provide a diverse range of learning opportunities to facilitate access and achievement for the whole community. This includes actively identifying and monitoring achievement, attendance and retention for students, identifying barriers to learning and using adaptive teaching and support to empower all students to succeed.

EDI for Employees

ESPA is committed to equitable treatment across all stages of employment - from recruitment and promotion to career management - using objective criteria to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. We proactively seek a workforce that reflects the diverse communities we serve, utilising inclusive recruitment strategies to reach all regional populations. By prioritising wellbeing and dignity, we cultivate a culture of belonging and respect, ensuring a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.

EDI for Continuous Professional Development

All ESPA employees have equal access to training and development opportunities throughout the induction process and in Continuous Professional Development programmes, which support good practice in embedding EDI objectives. All staff are required to undertake mandatory training in EDI.

EDI for Recruitment and Selection of Staff

ESPA staff will not discriminate unfairly and illegally, directly or indirectly, in making selection decisions. As such:

- All staff involved in the selection and interview process will have been trained or briefed on recruitment and selection procedures and the Equality Act 2010
- All applications will be assessed according to clear, pre-stated criteria, which will be both objective and job-related
- Any applicant who is classified as having a disability will be given the opportunity to discuss ways of overcoming any problems of access or any other issues relating to their disability. Any reasonable adjustments for staff will be considered and implemented where practicable
- Any applicant who is classified as having a disability and meets the essential criteria for the post will be guaranteed an interview
- Candidates will only be asked health-related questions during the interview process when this is necessary to support the candidate through that process or if it refers to specific requirements of the post (e.g. heavy lifting)

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the policy will be the responsibility of the Principal. Faculties and departments are responsible for the local monitoring and implementation of the policy through procedures and practices, reporting to the Principal as required. This will include:

- Annual audits by partners at Inspire Education Group
- Self-assessment at the curriculum, faculty and organisation level
- Student and Staff Surveys
- Data analysis
- Monitoring of formal complaints
- Collecting and disseminating examples of good practice
- Quality Improvement Strategy
- Reviews of Teaching & Learning

Protected Characteristics

The Eastern School of Performing Arts (ESPA) commits that it will not discriminate against anyone for any reason connected to the 'protected characteristics' under the act. In addition, ESPA has a wider commitment to ensure equality of opportunity for all, and therefore also includes commitments for all people regardless of their socio-economic status. A brief description of each characteristic is set out below

What do we mean by protected characteristics?

The following definitions have been adapted from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.com).

Age
The Act defines age by reference to a person's age group, and when it refers to people who share the protected characteristic of age, it means they are in the same age group.
Disability
A person is a disabled person (someone who has the protected characteristic of disability) if they have a physical and/or mental impairment which has what the law calls a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
There is no need for a person to have a medically diagnosed cause for their impairment. What matters is the effect of the impairment, not the cause.
Sex
A person's sex refers to the fact that they are male or female. In relation to a group of people, it refers to either men or women or either boys or girls.
Gender Reassignment
Refers to discriminating against a person based on the gender with which they identify. References to transgender people under the act cover those who are proposing to undergo, or are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex, i.e. gender reassignment. There is no requirement that the process of gender reassignment include medical supervision. It is recognising that there may be a difference between physical sex and gender identity. This policy relates not only to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment but also to the wider community who identify as a gender different to their sex registered at birth. This can include those who identify as gender fluid, non-binary and transgender.
Care Experienced
A care-experienced individual is anyone who, at any point in their life, has been in the care of someone other than their birth parents, including foster care, children's homes, kinship care, or being adopted after being in care, encompassing both current children in care and 'care leavers' (those who have left care but are eligible for support). It is a broad term for people whose lives have involved the state, often due to family difficulties, and covers diverse experiences like fostering, residential settings, or kinship care.
Key aspects of Care experience:

- Broad Scope: Includes foster care, children's homes, kinship care (with relatives/friends), supported accommodation, and even secure units.
- Adoption: Children adopted after being in care are considered care-experienced.
- Care Leavers: Young people (often 16-25) who have left care and are entitled to council support, but the specifics of 'care leaver' status vary by region (e.g. minimum time in care required)
- 'Looked After' Children: Those currently under the local authority's care.

No Minimum Time: The experience can be for any length of time, even short periods.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and start a family. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2002 that this extends to transgender people who are now able to marry or enter civil partnerships in their acquired gender because of the Gender Recognition Act (2004).

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 means that gay men and lesbian women in the UK are now able to register civil partnerships. Couples who register a civil partnership have the same rights as heterosexual married couples in areas like tax, social security, inheritance and workplace benefits. Changes to the 1973 Matrimonial Causes Act in the form of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, which came into force on 29 March 2014, now enable same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies and for civil partners to convert their partnership into a marriage if they wish.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The Act lists pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristics in its own right (before the Equality Act 2010, pregnancy and maternity came under sex discrimination). Discrimination (i.e. less favourable treatment) because an employee is breastfeeding is a form of sex discrimination within the workplace.

Race

Race means a person's:

- Colour, and/or
- Nationality (including citizenship), and/or
- Ethnic or national origin.

A racial group is composed of people who have or share a colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.

A person has the protected characteristic of race if they belong to a particular racial group, such as 'British people'. Racial groups can comprise two or more racial groups, such as 'British Asians'.

Religion and Beliefs

The protected characteristic of religion or belief includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes a lack of any such religion or belief.

A religion need not be mainstream or well-known to gain protections as a religion. It must, though, be identifiable and have a clear structure and belief system.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation means the attraction a person feels towards one sex or another (or both), which determines who they form intimate relationships with or are attracted to.

Some people are attracted to those of the same sex (lesbian women and gay men). Some people are attracted to people of both male and female sexes (bisexual people) or all sexes (pansexual people). Some people are attracted to the opposite sex (heterosexual people). Some people are not attracted to any sex (asexual people).

Everyone is protected from being treated less favourably because of sexual orientation, regardless of how they identify.

Sexual orientation discrimination also covers discrimination connected with manifestations of that sexual orientation.

Socio-economic Status

Although not a protected characteristic under the act, ESPA commits not to discriminate against anyone due to their socio-economic background.

Young Carers

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps look after a relative who has a condition, such as a disability, illness, mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol problem (www.nhs.uk). Many young people are sole carers for a person in their family, as well as undertaking a full-time course.

Ex-offenders

It is widely acknowledged that education plays a vital role in the prevention of crime and re-offending. ESPA is keen to ensure that a criminal record is not a barrier to education.

EDI Policy Accompanying Guidance on Race Inclusion

This guidance provides a framework for the Eastern School of Performing Arts (ESPA)'s commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students, staff, and stakeholders across our diverse communities in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire. It supports our goal of ensuring every member of our community is treated with equality and respect.

ESPA is guided by a proactive approach to anti-racism, defined as the promotion and practice of racial equality. This commitment is demonstrated through:

- **Celebrating Diversity:** Empowering our diverse community as a core strength
- **The Unison Anti-Racism Charter:** Adhering to rigorous national standards for workplace equality
- **College of Sanctuary Status:** Providing a rigorous culture of welcome and safety for refugees and asylum seekers, explicitly rejecting **Xenophobia** in all forms
- **Continuous Improvement:** Actively identifying and addressing practices that may perpetuate racial inequality,

Key Definitions & Standards

To ensure a consistent approach across all ESPA campuses, we apply the following definitions when identifying, reporting, and challenging discrimination:

- **Racism:** ESPA defines racism as a system of advantage based on race. It involves prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. It can be manifested through individual prejudice or institutional power
- **Anti-Racism:** This is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organisational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably
- **Systemic (Institutional) Racism:** The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It is seen in processes, attitudes, and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, and thoughtlessness
- **Antisemitism (IHRA):** ESPA adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition: *"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."*
- **Anti-Muslim Hostility (APPG):** ESPA adopts the All-Party Parliamentary Group: *"Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness."* We recognise this can include verbal abuse, physical attacks, and exclusion

- **Xenophobia:** Prejudice or hostility toward people from other countries. In the context of our College of Sanctuary status, this includes the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, and international students from discrimination based on their national origin or residency status.
- **Microaggressions:** Everyday, subtle, intentional and unintentional interactions or behaviours that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalised groups. (e.g. commenting on a student's "perfect English" or asking "where are you *really* from?")
- **Intersectionality:** The recognition that individuals may experience multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination (e.g. a student experiencing both racism and ableism, or xenophobia and homophobia)

Guidance for Equal Recruitment and Experience

To ensure our community is representative and equitable, the following practices are recommended:

- **Staff Recruitment:** Following Safer Recruitment and Selection procedures to welcome applicants from all racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds
- **Student Enrolment:** Ensuring an inclusive application process for all students
- **Data-Informed Action:** Monitoring ethnicity profiles to ensure parity in recruitment, retention, and attainment, as well as producing an ethnicity pay gap report in line with our Anti-Racism Charter commitments
- **Intersectionality:** Applying an intersectional lens to data analysis to support those who may face multiple disadvantages, such as vulnerable learner groups

Expected Standards of Conduct and Political Impartiality

All members of the ESPA community should model inclusive behaviours:

- **Staff** are expected to model tolerance and respond sensitively to diverse home backgrounds and cultural origins, as outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct and Ethics
- **Students:** Should follow the Student Code of Conduct by remaining respectful and refraining from discriminatory attitudes, including offensive "banter" or microaggressions
- **Professional Modelling:** Staff must model inclusive behaviours and maintain strict political impartiality when discussing sensitive global conflicts. Guidance from the *Independent Review into Antisemitism (2026)* must be followed to ensure classrooms remain safe spaces for all

Addressing Racial Discrimination

Discrimination is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. ESPA provides the following framework for challenging such behaviour:

- **Restorative Practice:** For lower-severity incidents or microaggressions, restorative conversations are used to increase awareness and prevent future escalation

- **Disciplinary Procedures:** Serious incidents, such as premeditated hate speech or repeat offences, are handled as gross misconduct under the relevant disciplinary policies
- **Staff Support:** The Staff Harassment and Bullying Policy provides a framework for maintaining a respectful working and learning environment

Education and Awareness

ESPA supports its community through ongoing learning:

- **Curriculum:** Anti-racism and racial equality are embedded within the Personal Development programme
- **Resource Review:** Curriculum materials are regularly reviewed to ensure they are inclusive, representative and do not reinforce colonial or biased narratives
- **Training:** Specific anti-racism training is provided to staff to equip them with the tools to model and challenge behaviours

Putting Guidance into Practice

The application of this guidance is overseen by the Principal and with partners at Inspire Education Group. Progress is tracked via an action plan derived from ethnicity data analysis in Self-Assessment Reports (SAR). This ensures that the organisation remains focused on closing achievement and attendance gaps through targeted interventions.