



Inclusion Policy

Approved by:	Lauren Meston	Date:	16/08/2026
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Introduction

Future Pathways CIC is committed to creating an inclusive, safe and ambitious alternative provision in which every young person is respected, able to participate and supported to achieve. Inclusion at Future Pathways means more than equal treatment. It means identifying barriers, making reasonable and proportionate adjustments, responding to individual need, challenging discrimination and ensuring that safeguarding, curriculum, behaviour, attendance and pastoral decisions do not unnecessarily exclude or disadvantage a young person.

This policy replaces the former Equality and Diversity Policy. It brings together our equality commitments with our approach to SEND, safeguarding, participation, accessibility, anti-bullying, attendance and the additional vulnerabilities that may affect young people accessing alternative provision.

Purpose and aims

- promote equality of opportunity, dignity, respect and belonging for all young people, staff, families and visitors;
- prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and challenge prejudice-based or discriminatory behaviour;
- identify and reduce barriers to learning, attendance, participation, safety and progression;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled young people and staff where required;
- ensure safeguarding practice recognises that identity, disability, SEND, care experience and other forms of disadvantage can increase vulnerability;
- provide an accessible, flexible curriculum and pastoral offer suited to the needs of young people in alternative provision;
- work effectively with commissioning schools, local authorities, families, social care, health and other agencies;
- listen to young people and use their views to inform support, reasonable adjustments and service improvement;
- monitor patterns of disadvantage, discrimination, bullying, attendance and engagement and act where concerns are identified.

Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been reviewed with regard to current legislation and Department for Education guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010, including the protected characteristics, disability discrimination provisions and the duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- Public Sector Equality Duty where it applies to the legal status or functions of the organisation, and the principles of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations;
- Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, effective from 1 September 2026;
- Department for Education: Equality Act 2010 - advice for schools;
- Department for Education statutory guidance on alternative provision, updated February 2025;
- Department for Education guidance relevant to behaviour, attendance, suspensions/exclusions, medical conditions and educational visits;
- Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant human rights principles;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Future Pathways is an alternative provision provider and may receive young people through commissioning arrangements with schools and local authorities. Where a statutory duty rests specifically with a commissioning school, academy trust or local authority, Future Pathways will work with that body to support compliance and will apply the principles in this policy as good practice within our own provision.

Scope

This policy applies to all young people attending Future Pathways and to employees, agency and supply staff, volunteers, trainees, contractors, visitors and partner professionals. It applies to on-site learning,

practical and vocational sessions, catering, salon and beauty activities, art, boxing and physical activity, outdoor and outward-bound activity, educational visits, community learning, transport where Future Pathways has responsibility, online activity using Future Pathways systems and work with external providers.

Our inclusion principles

- Every young person has equal value and will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Equality does not always mean treating everyone identically; some young people need different or additional support to achieve equitable access.
- High expectations will be maintained while reasonable adjustments and individualised support are provided.
- Behaviour will be understood in context without excusing harmful behaviour or lowering safeguarding expectations.
- Decisions will be child-centred, evidence-informed, proportionate and reviewed where circumstances change.
- No young person will be excluded from an activity simply because adjustment is inconvenient where a safe, reasonable alternative can be provided.
- Young people will be supported to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them.

Protected characteristics and unlawful discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination because of protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The application of particular protected characteristics differs between education, employment and other functions. Future Pathways will apply the Equality Act according to the relevant legal context and will seek appropriate advice where a complex issue arises.

Future Pathways does not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination, discrimination arising from disability, harassment or victimisation. Associative and perceptive discrimination will also be taken seriously where applicable.

Young people who may require additional inclusion support

Young people attending alternative provision may experience overlapping needs or disadvantages. Future Pathways will pay particular attention to barriers affecting young people who:

- have SEND, learning difficulties, disabilities, medical needs or communication needs;
- are looked after, previously looked after, on the edge of care or supported by children's social care;
- are young carers or have significant family responsibilities;
- are experiencing poor mental health, trauma, bereavement or emotional dysregulation;
- are persistently or severely absent, missing education, excluded or at risk of exclusion;
- are from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities, minority ethnic groups, refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds;
- have English as an additional language;
- are economically disadvantaged or experiencing poverty, homelessness or housing instability;
- are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or are questioning their sexual orientation;
- are gender-questioning or may have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment;
- are pregnant or parents;

- are at risk of exploitation, offending, substance misuse or becoming NEET;
- have experienced bullying, discrimination, abuse or other adverse childhood experiences.

This list is not exhaustive. Support will be based on the individual young person rather than assumptions about a group or identity.

Roles and responsibilities

Managing Director and DSL - Lauren Meston

Lauren Meston has overall organisational responsibility for ensuring that inclusion, equality and safeguarding expectations are reflected in Future Pathways policy and practice. She will ensure that significant equality or discrimination concerns with a safeguarding dimension are considered through safeguarding procedures and that patterns or systemic concerns are acted upon.

All staff

- model respectful, inclusive language and behaviour;
- challenge discriminatory, prejudicial, sexualised, homophobic, biphobic, racist, sexist, ableist, religiously hostile or otherwise degrading behaviour;
- avoid assumptions about ability, identity, family background or need;
- implement agreed reasonable adjustments and support plans;
- report safeguarding, bullying, discrimination and accessibility concerns promptly;
- plan lessons and activities so that young people can participate safely and meaningfully;
- maintain confidentiality while sharing information appropriately for safeguarding and support.

Commissioning schools and local authorities

Future Pathways expects commissioning bodies to provide timely and accurate information about SEND, safeguarding, medical needs, care status, attendance, risk, reasonable adjustments and relevant plans before or at the point of placement. Future Pathways will share progress and concerns proportionately and contribute to reviews, PEPs, EHCP processes and multi-agency planning where appropriate.

Referral, admission and transition

Placement decisions will be based on whether Future Pathways can safely and appropriately meet the young person's needs, not on discriminatory assumptions. Where there are barriers to access, reasonable adjustments and additional support will be considered before concluding that a placement or activity is unsuitable.

At referral and induction, Future Pathways will seek relevant information about safeguarding, SEND, disability, health, communication, culture, religion or belief, care status, previous experiences of discrimination, attendance and known reasonable adjustments. Missing information will be actively followed up where it affects safety or access.

Transitions into, between and out of Future Pathways will be planned to avoid unnecessary disruption. Relevant information will be transferred securely and promptly.

SEND, disability and reasonable adjustments

Future Pathways recognises that disabled young people and those with SEND may face additional barriers to learning, communication, relationships and safeguarding. KCSIE 2026 highlights that children with SEND can be more vulnerable to isolation, prejudice-based bullying, communication barriers and difficulties recognising or reporting abuse.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered proactively and may include:

- adapted teaching approaches, instructions, materials or assessment arrangements;
- additional processing time, visual supports, assistive technology or communication support;
- adapted timetables, transitions, seating, sensory arrangements or access to quieter spaces;
- adjustments to behaviour support where disability or SEND is relevant;
- accessibility arrangements for practical, vocational, physical and off-site activities;
- additional supervision, pastoral check-ins or support with peer relationships;

- adaptations to premises, equipment or auxiliary aids where reasonable and required.

Adjustments will be individual, proportionate and reviewed. A diagnosis is not always required before practical support is considered. Future Pathways will liaise with the commissioning school, SENCO, local authority and other professionals as appropriate.

Curriculum, teaching and participation

The curriculum and wider offer will promote inclusion by providing meaningful routes into learning and progression. Staff will avoid unnecessary stereotyping and will ensure that resources, examples and discussion do not demean protected groups or normalise discrimination.

Where an activity presents a genuine safety, safeguarding or accessibility issue, staff will assess the individual risk and consider reasonable alternatives rather than applying blanket exclusion. This is particularly important in practical subjects, sport, outdoor learning, educational visits and work-related activity.

Safeguarding and inclusion

Inclusion and safeguarding are closely connected. A young person's disability, SEND, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, care experience, poverty or other circumstances can affect both the risks they face and their ability to seek help. Staff must not attribute signs of abuse, exploitation or distress solely to SEND, behaviour or background.

Any concern that a young person may be suffering or at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation must be reported to Lauren Meston, DSL, or a Deputy DSL in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Equality or inclusion processes must never delay a safeguarding response.

Child-on-child abuse, bullying and discriminatory behaviour

Future Pathways has zero tolerance for abuse, harassment or discriminatory bullying. KCSIE 2026 makes clear that child-on-child abuse may include cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment, misogyny and other harmful behaviour. It must never be dismissed as banter, joking, part of growing up or normal behaviour.

Incidents will be responded to under the Anti-Bullying, Behaviour and Safeguarding policies as appropriate. The response will consider the impact on the young person affected, the needs and risks of the young person responsible, any protected characteristic, SEND, power imbalance, repetition, online elements and risk of recurrence.

Young people who report discrimination or abuse will be listened to, taken seriously and supported. They will not be required to resolve serious incidents themselves or participate in restorative work unless it is safe, appropriate and genuinely voluntary.

Gender-questioning young people

Future Pathways will respond to gender-questioning young people in a calm, respectful, individual and safeguarding-led way, in line with current law and Department for Education guidance. Staff will avoid assumptions about a young person's needs, identity or future choices and will consider the young person's age, maturity, welfare, privacy, dignity, SEND and any safeguarding concerns.

Where questions arise about facilities, activities, records, language, uniform or other arrangements, Future Pathways will consider the relevant legal duties, safeguarding needs and the rights, safety, privacy and dignity of all young people. Where necessary, the DSL and Managing Director will seek advice from the commissioning school, local authority or other appropriate professional body. No young person should be bullied, harassed or discriminated against because they are gender-questioning or because of a protected characteristic.

Religion, belief and cultural inclusion

Future Pathways respects lawful religion, belief and non-belief. Reasonable arrangements will be considered for religious observance, dietary requirements, dress and participation, subject to

safeguarding, health and safety, operational requirements and the rights of others. Staff will distinguish between respectful discussion or disagreement and harassment or discrimination.

Attendance, behaviour and exclusion from activities

Attendance and behaviour concerns will be considered through an inclusion lens. Staff will explore underlying factors such as SEND, unmet need, anxiety, bullying, discrimination, caring responsibilities, trauma, medical needs or barriers relating to transport or family circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments will not remove appropriate boundaries or consequences for harmful behaviour. However, sanctions and support plans should be proportionate, individualised and reviewed to ensure that disabled young people or those with SEND are not placed at an avoidable substantial disadvantage.

Removal from an activity or a placement-related decision must not be used as a substitute for addressing unmet need or safeguarding concerns. Where a significant change to provision is being considered, the commissioning body and relevant professionals will be involved.

Online inclusion and digital access

Digital access and online safety will be managed in accordance with the Future Pathways Online Safety and Mobile Phone Policy. Young people access the internet only through Future Pathways-managed laptops that are filtered and monitored, and they are supervised while using them. Staff will consider accessibility needs and the additional online risks faced by young people with SEND or other vulnerabilities.

Staff equality, recruitment and workplace inclusion

Future Pathways is committed to fair employment practices and will not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment, training, promotion, terms and conditions, performance management or dismissal. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for disabled applicants and employees.

Safer recruitment requirements apply to all appointments. Equality considerations do not override safeguarding checks, but safeguarding processes must also be fair, evidence-based and free from unlawful discrimination. Concerns about staff conduct will be managed under the Low-Level Concerns, Allegations, Whistleblowing and disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

Visitors, contractors and partner providers

Discriminatory, abusive or harassing behaviour by visitors, contractors or partner providers will not be tolerated. Future Pathways may challenge behaviour, restrict access, terminate an activity or raise concerns with the person's employer or commissioning body where necessary.

When working with external providers, Future Pathways will seek reasonable assurance that they can meet relevant accessibility, safeguarding and equality needs for the young people involved.

Reporting discrimination, harassment or exclusion

Any young person, parent/carer, staff member or visitor may raise an inclusion, discrimination or accessibility concern. Staff must report serious incidents and any concern involving possible harm, abuse or exploitation immediately to the DSL. Other incidents should be recorded and shared with an appropriate senior member of staff as soon as reasonably practicable.

Reports will be handled sensitively. No person will be disadvantaged for raising a concern in good faith. Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, the appropriate safeguarding, low-level concerns, allegations, grievance or complaints procedure will be followed rather than relying solely on this policy.

Recording, monitoring and equality impact

Future Pathways will monitor information proportionately to identify patterns of disadvantage or concern. This may include data on attendance, suspensions or removals from activities, bullying and discrimination, safeguarding, SEND, reasonable adjustments, complaints, progress, destinations and learner voice.

When significant policies, practices or service changes are developed, Future Pathways will consider potential equality and inclusion impacts and whether particular groups could be placed at a disadvantage. Where evidence identifies disproportionate impact, leaders will consider appropriate corrective or positive action.

Learner voice and participation

Young people will be encouraged to share their views about safety, belonging, accessibility and barriers to participation. Communication methods will be adapted where needed. Feedback will be used alongside incident data and staff observations to improve practice.

Training and staff awareness

Staff induction and ongoing professional development will include relevant information about equality, SEND, safeguarding vulnerabilities, discrimination, child-on-child abuse, reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice. Additional training will be provided where patterns of concern or individual needs indicate it is required.

Complaints

Concerns should normally be raised with Future Pathways promptly so that they can be resolved. Where a matter cannot be resolved informally, the Future Pathways Complaints Policy will apply. Employees may also use the appropriate grievance or whistleblowing procedure. Safeguarding concerns will always be managed through safeguarding procedures regardless of whether a complaint has also been made.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, Future Pathways provision or organisational arrangements change, or where a serious incident or pattern of concern identifies a need for review.

The review will consider learner voice, staff feedback, safeguarding and bullying information, SEND and reasonable-adjustment issues, attendance and engagement, complaints and relevant feedback from families, commissioning schools and local authorities.

Related Future Pathways policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy / SEND procedures
- Children in Care Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Online Safety and Mobile Phone Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Supporting Young People with Medical Conditions / Medication Policy
- Allergy Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection / Privacy Policy
- Risk Assessment procedures

Reference guidance

- Department for Education - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Department for Education - Equality Act 2010: advice for schools
- Department for Education - Alternative provision statutory guidance

- Department for Education - SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Department for Education - Inclusion bases in schools, 2026 (where relevant as good-practice context)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014

Appendix 1 - Inclusion and reasonable-adjustment checklist

When planning a placement, activity, support plan or significant change, staff should consider:

- What is the young person being asked to access or participate in?
- Is there a disability, SEND, medical, communication, cultural, religious, safeguarding or other relevant need?
- What specific barrier or disadvantage may arise?
- What does the young person say would help?
- What information has the parent/carer, commissioning school or professional provided?
- Can the barrier be removed or reduced through a reasonable adjustment?
- Would the adjustment affect the safety, privacy or rights of others, and can that impact be managed?
- Does a risk assessment or support plan need updating?
- Who needs to know about the adjustment?
- When will the arrangement be reviewed?

Appendix 2 - Staff quick response to discrimination or exclusion

1. Make the situation safe and stop harmful behaviour where possible.
2. Listen to the young person and take the concern seriously.
3. Do not dismiss discriminatory or abusive language as banter or joking.
4. Consider whether there is an immediate safeguarding concern.
5. Report safeguarding concerns to Lauren Meston, DSL, or a Deputy DSL immediately.
6. Record what happened accurately and include the young person's own words where relevant.
7. Consider SEND, disability, protected characteristics, previous incidents and any power imbalance.
8. Put immediate support or reasonable adjustments in place where needed.
9. Inform parents/carers and the commissioning school where appropriate and lawful.
10. Follow up to check that the concern has stopped and that the young person feels safe and able to participate.

Approval

Signed: *L. Meston*

Lauren Meston - Managing Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead, Future Pathways

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