



STARFISH AP
The Starfish Way
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Policy
Academic Year 2026–2027

Item	Details
Document Title	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Policy
Organisation	Starfish Alternative Provision
Academic Year	2026–2027
Version	1
Policy Owner	Chloe Fox – Director & Head of Provision
Applies To	All pupils, employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors, visitors, commissioning schools, families and professionals working with or on behalf of The Starfish Hub
Date Approved	Sep 2026
Review Date	Sep 2027
Next Review	Annually, or sooner following legislative, regulatory or organisational changes

Document Purpose

This policy sets out The Starfish Hub's commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that every child, family and member of staff deserves to feel valued, respected and included. We recognise that many children referred to Alternative Provision have experienced barriers to learning, exclusion, trauma, discrimination, unmet needs or circumstances that have impacted their sense of belonging.

Our commitment to inclusion extends beyond compliance with legislation. We seek to create a culture where difference is welcomed, individuality is celebrated and every person is supported to participate, contribute and thrive.

This policy outlines how The Starfish Hub promotes equality of opportunity, prevents discrimination, removes barriers to participation and creates an environment where every individual feels safe, respected and able to succeed

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This policy should be read alongside The Starfish Hub's SEND & Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour, Relationships & Relational Practice Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Attendance, Engagement & Belonging Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and the wider policies forming part of The Starfish Way Governance & Practice Framework.

The Starfish Way

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that every person deserves to feel that they belong.

Belonging is more than being present. It is the experience of being welcomed, understood, valued and accepted for who you are.

Many of the children attending The Starfish Hub have experienced environments where they felt misunderstood, judged or disconnected. Some have experienced exclusion, discrimination or repeated barriers that have affected their confidence and self-worth.

We believe that meaningful inclusion is achieved not by expecting people to fit a system, but by creating systems that recognise and respond to individual needs.

The Starfish Way is built upon eight guiding principles:

Safety

Every individual has the right to feel physically, emotionally and psychologically safe.

Trust

Trust develops when people know they will be treated fairly, consistently and respectfully.

Attunement

We seek to understand individual experiences, identities, strengths and needs.

Regulation

Calm, predictable and respectful environments enable people to thrive.

Flexibility

We adapt our practice to remove barriers and support participation.

Inclusion

Every person has the right to belong, contribute and be valued.

Support

Strong outcomes are achieved through collaboration and partnership.

Humanity

Every interaction is rooted in dignity, compassion, empathy and respect.

When considering equality and inclusion, we do not ask:

"How do we treat everybody the same?"

Instead, we ask:

"What does this individual need in order to feel safe, included, respected and able to succeed?"

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Pupils.
- Parents and carers.
- Employees.
- Volunteers.
- Agency staff.
- Contractors.
- Visitors.
- Commissioners.
- Partner agencies.
- Professionals working with or on behalf of The Starfish Hub.

The principles within this policy apply to all aspects of provision, including:

- Admissions and referrals.
- Education and curriculum delivery.
- Attendance and engagement.
- Behaviour support.
- Enrichment opportunities.
- Recruitment and employment.
- Professional development.
- Communication.
- Decision-making processes.
- Day-to-day interactions.

Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.

- SEND Code of Practice.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Current Edition).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Current Edition).
- Education Act 2002.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

The Starfish Hub will review this policy whenever legislation or statutory guidance changes.

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of:

- Age (employment-related contexts).
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

The Starfish Hub is committed to ensuring that no individual experiences unlawful discrimination because of a protected characteristic.

What Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Mean at The Starfish Hub

Equality

Equality means ensuring fair access to opportunities, recognising that some individuals may require additional support or reasonable adjustments in order to achieve equitable outcomes.

Diversity

Diversity recognises and values the differences that make every individual unique.

This may include:

- Culture.
- Heritage.

- Ethnicity.
- Disability.
- Neurodivergence.
- Faith and belief.
- Family structure.
- Language.
- Gender.
- Sexual orientation.
- Life experiences.
- Interests and strengths.

Inclusion

Inclusion means creating environments where people are welcomed, respected, listened to and able to participate fully.

Belonging

Belonging means feeling accepted, valued and connected.

At The Starfish Hub, belonging is not viewed as an outcome of success. We believe belonging is the foundation from which success grows.

Promoting Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

The Starfish Hub promotes equality and inclusion through:

- Relationship-first practice.
- Trauma-informed approaches.
- Restorative practice.
- High aspirations for every child.
- Positive representation and visibility.
- Accessible learning environments.
- Adaptive teaching approaches.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Pupil voice and participation.
- Inclusive curriculum planning.
- Celebration of diversity.
- Strong partnerships with families and professionals.

We actively challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination whenever they arise.

Supporting Pupils

Many pupils attending The Starfish Hub have experienced:

- Disrupted education.
- Exclusion.
- Trauma.
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Neurodivergence.
- SEND.
- Social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Discrimination.
- Social disadvantage.

We are committed to removing barriers wherever reasonably possible.

Support may include:

- Individual learning approaches.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Emotional wellbeing support.
- Communication support.
- Sensory adaptations.
- Flexible approaches to engagement.
- Personalised planning.
- Multi-agency collaboration.

Our aim is for every child to experience success, participation and belonging.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Starfish Hub will make reasonable adjustments where required to ensure individuals are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Adjustments may include:

- Adapted teaching approaches.
- Alternative communication methods.
- Environmental adaptations.
- Assistive technology.
- Flexible routines.
- Additional processing time.

- Modified resources.
- Accessible information.
- Adjustments will always be considered on an individual basis.

Equality in Employment

The Starfish Hub is committed to equality of opportunity throughout employment.

This includes:

- Recruitment.
- Selection.
- Induction.
- Professional development.
- Training.
- Promotion.
- Performance management.
- Flexible working arrangements where appropriate.

Employment decisions will be based on:

- Suitability.
- Skills.
- Qualifications.
- Experience.
- Professional values.

Discrimination in any form will not be tolerated.

Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation

The Starfish Hub is committed to creating an environment free from:

- Bullying.
- Harassment.
- Victimisation.
- Discrimination.
- Hate incidents.
- Prejudice-based behaviour.

This includes behaviour relating to protected characteristics and any other aspect of an individual's identity.

Examples may include:

- Discriminatory language.
- Exclusion.
- Intimidation.
- Online abuse.
- Derogatory comments.
- Hate-related incidents.

Concerns will be addressed promptly through restorative, educational and safeguarding approaches where appropriate. Serious concerns may require involvement from external agencies.

Pupil Voice

We believe that inclusion cannot be achieved without listening to those we support.

Pupils will be encouraged to:

- Share their views.
- Contribute to decision-making.
- Participate in reviews.
- Influence provision development.
- Celebrate their identities and experiences.

Pupil voice helps ensure that our provision remains responsive, inclusive and meaningful.

Partnership with Families and Professionals

Strong partnerships are central to inclusive practice. The Starfish Hub will work collaboratively with:

- Families.
- Commissioning schools.
- Local Authorities.
- Health professionals.
- Social care professionals.
- Community organisations.

We believe that inclusive outcomes are strengthened when everyone works together around the needs of the child.

Monitoring and Equality Objectives

The Starfish Hub will monitor information, where appropriate, to identify patterns, barriers and opportunities for improvement.

This may include information relating to:

- Attendance.
- Engagement.
- Behaviour.
- Progress and achievement.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Complaints.
- Recruitment.
- Staff development.

Our equality objectives are to:

- Promote a culture of belonging.
- Remove barriers to participation.
- Improve outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- Strengthen inclusive practice.
- Ensure equality is embedded across all aspects of provision.
- Celebrate diversity throughout our community.

Equality Impact Considerations

When developing or reviewing policies, procedures or significant organisational changes, The Starfish Hub will consider potential impacts on equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Where appropriate, adjustments will be made to reduce barriers and promote equitable outcomes.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Information relating to equality concerns, discrimination incidents or inclusion support arrangements will be recorded appropriately and managed in accordance with The Starfish Hub's Data Protection & Information Governance Policy. Confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible whilst ensuring that safeguarding and statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.

Monitoring and Review

The Director and Head of Provision will monitor the implementation of this policy to ensure that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging remain embedded throughout The Starfish Hub.

Monitoring may include:

- Pupil outcomes.
- Attendance and engagement.
- Behaviour patterns.
- Complaints.
- Safeguarding information.
- Recruitment and workforce data.
- Feedback from pupils, families and professionals.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes to legislation, guidance or organisational practice require amendment.