



ARK AEP Equality and Diversity Policy- 2026

Organisation	ARK Alternative Education Provision (ARK AEP)
Policy title	Equality and Diversity Policy
Approved by	Kay Walton and Allison Middlemas
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Review date	September 2027
Policy owner	Kay Walton
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Kay Walton
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Allison Middlemas

1. Purpose and Commitment

ARK Alternative Education Provision is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in every aspect of its work. We provide bespoke academic, social, emotional and personal support for young people aged 12 to 16 across Hull and the East Riding, and we aim to ensure that every learner, member of staff, volunteer, parent, carer, visitor and stakeholder is treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

This policy sets out ARK AEP's commitment to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity;

and fostering positive relationships within our community. It reflects ARK AEP's values of aspiration, resilience, kindness, safety, acceptance, respect, empathy and positivity.

2. Legal Framework

This policy supports ARK AEP's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and relevant education, employment, safeguarding and data protection requirements. ARK AEP will not unlawfully discriminate because of the 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 or sexual orientation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all learners, staff, agency workers, volunteers, trustees or governors where applicable, contractors, visitors, parents, carers and any other individuals who engage with ARK AEP. It applies on site, during off-site activities, on educational visits, during remote or blended learning, when travelling as part of ARK AEP activities and in online spaces where behaviour affects safety, wellbeing, access or participation.

4. Our Equality and Diversity Principles

- Every learner and adult should feel safe, valued, included and able to belong.
- Individual differences and lived experiences are recognised, respected and celebrated.
- Learning opportunities, support and reasonable adjustments are planned around individual need.
- Discrimination, harassment, victimisation, bullying or prejudice-based behaviour are not acceptable.
- Staff model inclusive language, respectful relationships and positive behaviour.
- Equality and inclusion are considered in curriculum planning, learner support, recruitment, training, safeguarding and day-to-day practice.

5. ARK AEP's Commitment

ARK AEP will create and maintain a safe, happy and inclusive learning environment where learners are supported, encouraged, challenged and empowered to grow, learn, thrive and succeed. We will actively promote equality of opportunity, remove barriers to participation wherever possible and ensure that decisions are fair, transparent and based on individual need, safeguarding requirements and suitability.

ARK AEP will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in policies, procedures, risk assessments, admissions, learner support planning, behaviour practice, safeguarding arrangements, recruitment, professional development and partnership working.

6. Inclusive Practice for Learners

- Provide bespoke academic, social, emotional and personal support that reflects each learner's strengths, needs and aspirations.
- Make reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities, SEND or additional needs, where practicable and appropriate.
- Use inclusive curriculum materials, activities and examples that reflect diverse identities, cultures and experiences.
- Promote respectful discussion, positive relationships and understanding of difference.
- Respond promptly to prejudice-based incidents, discriminatory language, bullying or exclusion.
- Work with families, carers, schools, providers and external services to support access, wellbeing and positive outcomes.

7. Equality in Employment and Volunteering

ARK AEP is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment, induction, training, professional development, performance support and day-to-day working arrangements. Recruitment and selection decisions will be based on merit, suitability, safer recruitment requirements and the needs of learners. No applicant, employee, volunteer or contractor will be treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Staff and volunteers are expected to contribute to a working environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, and to uphold dignity and respect in all interactions with colleagues, learners, families, visitors and partner organisations.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Leadership:** Ensure this policy is implemented, reviewed and reflected in ARK AEP's culture, curriculum, staffing and safeguarding practice.
- **Policy owner:** Maintain the policy, coordinate review activity and support staff understanding.
- **DSL and DDSL:** Consider equality and diversity within safeguarding practice and ensure concerns linked to vulnerability, discrimination or harm are responded to appropriately.
- **Staff and volunteers:** Model inclusive behaviour, challenge discriminatory language or conduct, make reasonable adjustments where appropriate and report concerns promptly.
- **Learners:** Treat others with kindness, respect and acceptance, and seek help when they experience or witness discrimination, bullying or exclusion.
- **Parents, carers and visitors:** Support ARK AEP's inclusive ethos and behave respectfully towards all members of the community.

9. Reporting Concerns and Incidents

Any concern about discrimination, harassment, victimisation, prejudice-based behaviour, bullying or unequal treatment should be reported to a member of staff, the policy owner, the DSL or the DDSL as soon as possible. Concerns may be raised by learners, staff, parents, carers, visitors or external partners.

ARK AEP will take concerns seriously, respond in a timely and proportionate way, record incidents appropriately and provide support to those affected. Where a concern may indicate safeguarding risk, child-on-child abuse, staff misconduct or a wider pattern of harm, ARK AEP will follow the relevant safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying, complaints, staff conduct or whistleblowing procedures.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

ARK AEP will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through learner feedback, staff reflection, incident records, safeguarding information, complaints, recruitment practice, curriculum review and partnership feedback. Information will be used to identify barriers, improve practice and strengthen ARK AEP's inclusive culture.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, statutory guidance, organisational arrangements or local safeguarding and education requirements.

11. Related Policies and Documents

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Admissions Policy and Admissions Form
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Procedure