The Exe Valley & Moorsway Federation

EQUALITY DUTY REPORT
November 2026

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced nine major Acts of Parliament and almost 100 sets of regulations to create a single, consolidated source of discrimination law. It protects people against discrimination [both direct and indirect], harassment and victimisation based on nine protected characteristics. These are as follows: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership [in employment only], pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Age is considered to be a relevant characteristic when considering a school's duty as an employer but not in relation to children.

Public Sector Equality Duty

One part of the Equality Act 2010 is the Public Sector Equality Duty [PSED], which is a duty for public bodies, such as schools, to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work. The duty applies to all types of schools across all phases. The general duty has three main elements that schools must give due regard to when carrying out their functions as public bodies. Across all the protected characteristics, they must do the following:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other unlawful conduct in the Equality Act
- Advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all schools to publish specific and measurable equality objectives, to be updated at least every four years. This document identifies the six key objectives for improving equality between different groups in the Exe Valley Federation. This report assesses the impact of the six objectives from 1st September 2025 to 31st August 2026 and outlines a new set of equality objectives; the published plan will run for four years and a new one will be written by the end of 2027.

An Equality Duty Position Statement for the federation has been written and published on the EVMF website. This has been reproduced in Appendix 1 of this report. The statement emphasises that equality brings quality for everyone and the creation of a fairer society where everyone can participate and achieve their potential. Equality is about valuing a person 'as an equal' and treating people according to their needs and characteristics to achieve an equal or fair outcome – it's not necessarily about treating everyone the same. This was shared with all families at the start of September 2022 as a small group of parents have not understood that everyone needs to be treated fairly, regardless of their needs and characteristics.

What is due regard?

In legal terms, this means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. In practical terms, it means demonstrating an awareness of a school's duties under the Act by assessing the impact any decision or action will have on people with protected characteristics. It also means considering any equality implications when developing policies and taking decisions and ensuring that they are reviewed regularly and considered from an equality perspective. Thirdly, it means integrating PSED when carrying out the school's function, which means thinking about how to comply with the duty seriously, rigorously and with an open mind; any process must be more than a tick-box exercise.

Specific duties

The specific duties require schools to do the following:

- Publish information to demonstrate how the school complies with the PSED and update this annually
- Prepare and publish equality objectives, updated every 4 years

There is a section on the Equality Act 2010 in relation to Safeguarding in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022. This focuses on the role of schools in ensuring that some children who are at greater risk of harm, are protected.

Objective 1: To ensure that all EVMF policies are written with equality in mind and reflect the federation's commitment to protect adults and children from discrimination *[All protected characteristics].* All policies were updated last year to include a more robust equality statement and church school statement. As policies are

reviewed by governors and senior leaders during the year, any outdated terminology is being replaced by inclusive language throughout each document.

Objective 2: To increase understanding between religious or ethnic groups. We have noticed that children do not come from a wide range of backgrounds and do not have a wide experience of different beliefs and cultures. There has been evidence of more teaching of different world religions this year and sharing of relevant resources between schools. Over the last 12 months, leaders of different world religions have been invited to talk to classes of pupils across the federation using on-line platforms. The talks for Years 3 and 4 have given Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu leaders the opportunity to talk about their faith and how this impacts their daily life. The talks for Years 5 and 6 have taken this further, with talks from Humanist, Hindu, Sikh and Pagan leaders, who spoke about how their beliefs helped them in difficult times. The quality of questions posed by pupils has improved over the course of the talks and has resulted in some deep thinking around what equality looks like in practice in Britain today. As part of their residential visit to Bristol, Years 5 and 6 visited the Jamai Mosque and had the privilege of observing afternoon prayers, as well as being shown around the mosque by the Imam. The quality of the work done by Thorverton and Silverton C of E Schools to increase understanding between religious groups was identified as a strength by SIAMS inspectors during the year. The Federation's Strategic Plan [for 2026 to 2031] has a strong emphasis on belonging and includes developing inclusion strategies for each school.

Objective 3: To ensure levels of attainment between girls and boys are equal. In the past we have noticed that there are differences between the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Keystage 2. The last available national data for Year 6 is from 2025, when girls outperformed boys by four percentage points in reading, writing and maths combined. This year for EVMF Year 6 pupils, the gap was slightly wider at 5%. Girls and boys performed equally well at the higher level in 2026, but both were below the national outcomes for the higher level. There were 47 boys and 47 girls in this cohort. The outcomes for girls and boys have varied over the last four years, although this needs to be monitored, it is hard to discern any consistent patterns due to the relatively small number of pupils in the federation schools. These characteristics will be monitored in the coming year through Pupil Progress Meetings. Disadvantaged children in EVMF schools performed above the national average in 2026 but children with SEND support performed less well, which is a reflection of the needs of this cohort.

RWM	EVF ARE+ 2026	National ARE+ 2025 [latest data]	EVF above ARE 2026	National above ARE 2025 [latest data]
Girls	61%	64%	2%	8%
Boys	56%	60%	2%	7%
SEND	16%	22%	0%	1%
Disadv	56%	49%*	0%	4%*

***2026 data**

Objective 4: To give girls opportunities to explore a wide range of careers, especially careers that are traditionally male-dominated *[Sex].* In recent years Whimple School has developed a programme of 'in conversation with' events on line, talking to parents who work in traditionally male-dominated jobs. A series of careers talks took place in the autumn of 2024 to enable all EVMF pupils, especially girls, to learn about a wide range of careers, including women in Naval procurement, law and the Met Office. Whilst this objective was met at the time, it needs to be revisited in 2026/27 to ensure that every child has the opportunity to explore a wide range of careers.

Objective 5: To raise awareness of the increased risk of abuse experienced by children with special needs and disabilities *[Disability].* Staff training on 4th or 5th September 2024 focused on being more alert to the needs of children with SEND [slide 15 of presentation to staff]. The training highlighted that children with disabilities are 3 times more likely to be abused than other children. This group is more vulnerable because:

- They might rely on others for assistance and care, giving abusers more opportunities to abuse them.
- They can be more vulnerable to grooming and exploitation.
- They might find it harder to communicate their abuse. This could be due to communication barriers caused by speech, language and communication needs, or because they're more isolated and have fewer opportunities to tell someone about abuse.

Signs of abuse can be missed, as they are seen as symptoms of their SEN or disability, or caused by their SEN or disability. For example, bruises might be assumed to be caused by disability equipment or problems with mobility. Or children experiencing abuse or attempting to tell someone about their abuse might self-harm or display inappropriate sexual behaviour, or other repetitive or challenging behaviours, which are misinterpreted as part of their needs or disabilities. Children with SEND might be less likely to understand that what they're experiencing is abuse. This does not mean they are not harmed by abuse though – they are still experiencing harm. This was followed by an example from a serious case review. Staff were encouraged to be even more alert to children with SEND and any signs that something might be wrong and always use professional curiosity [Think 'why?' or 'what might be going on here?']. The safeguarding update in September 2025 did not specifically focus on raising awareness in this way, although it was re-visited in September 2026 in order to remind staff of the importance of being aware of the additional risks that pupils with SEND may face.

Objective 6: Advance equality by teaching children that families come in many forms, including same-sex parents and same sex relationships *[Sexual orientation].* One Decision is being used by all schools to support the teaching of PSHE. Children are gaining understanding of same sex parental relationships. There are examples of positive role models in the EVF schools of same-sex parental relationships and this has been accepted by children in the relevant classes. One Decision is being well delivered and children can talk about protected characteristics when questioned in school reviews.

The Equality Objectives will be monitored by the Lead Governor for Inclusion who will report to the FGB regularly on the progress made towards reaching these objectives. Heads of School have now taken on the responsibility for monitoring the use of Pupil Premium Grant and the impact this has on the progress of vulnerable children. New objectives will then be set in the light of the progress towards meeting these objectives for the following year.

John Jolliffe,
Executive Principal
13/11/26

The Exe Valley & Moorsway Federation

APPENDIX 1: Equality Duty Position Statement

Equality brings quality for everyone and the creation of a fairer society where everyone can participate and achieve their potential.
Equality is about valuing a person 'as an equal' and treating people according to their needs and characteristics to achieve an equal or fair outcome – it's not necessarily about treating everyone the same. We recognise that not all differences are visible or obvious but are still every bit as important as those that can be seen.

An equal society values human diversity, recognising that diversity brings a range of skills, knowledge, values, styles, perspectives and ideas that secure our future as a place where people want to learn, work and prosper, and challenges the inequalities that destroy this diversity in our society and organisations.
The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), part of the Equality Act, came into force in April 2011. It requires organisations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

The duty has a key role to play in making sure that fairness is at the heart of public bodies' work and that public services meet the needs of different groups. It covers a range of public bodies, including schools, NHS organisations, government departments, local authorities, and police authorities.

The duty replaces the three former duties that required government departments, local authorities and other public bodies to take into account gender, race and disability equality both as employers and when making policy decisions and delivering services. The duty standardises this requirement and also extends it to cover age, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 puts various requirements on schools when exercising their functions. The general duty requires schools to have due regard to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having "due regard" means consciously thinking about the three aims of the PSED as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by schools, such as:

- how they act as employers
- how they develop, evaluate and review policy
- how they design, deliver and evaluate services
- how they commission and procure from others

The Exe Valley & Moorsway Federation is committed to adopting the aims of the PSED in all schools and workplaces.
The Public Sector Equality Duty introduces legislation in the form of specific duties. The duties require schools to:

- Publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the PSED. This information must include, in particular, information relating to people who share a protected characteristic
- Prepare and publish equality objectives

The Exe Valley & Moorsway Federation is committed to eliminating discrimination, providing equality of opportunity and challenging prejudice in order to advance the achievement of equality and foster good relations between diverse groups across the federation schools.