



## **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy**

### **1. Scope and Purpose of this Policy**

1.1 The PLS is committed to promoting and achieving equality of opportunity for all trainees and staff.

1.2 The PLS aims to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

1.3 The PLS does not discriminate against staff on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability or age (the protected characteristics).

1.4 The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which trainees and staff treat students, parents and visitors

1.5 All trainees and staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

1.6 This policy does not form part of any trainee's terms and conditions and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to trainees and staff at the schools who are required to familiarise themselves and comply with its contents.

1.7 This Policy applies to all the PLS staff and schools' trainees

1.8 All trainees and staff must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the PLS's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Trainees will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

1.9 Any questions about the content or application of this policy should be referred to the PLS Co-Directors in the first instance.

1.10 This policy applies to all aspects of the PLS's relationship with trainees and staff and to relations between trainee and staff members at all levels. This includes:

- trainee placement advertisements;
- recruitment and selection;
- training and development;
- conduct at work;
- disciplinary and grievance procedures;

1.11 The PLS and the schools will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

## **2. Forms of Discrimination**

2.1 Discrimination by or against a member of trainee cohort and staff is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

2.2 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not “fit in” would be direct discrimination.

2.3 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

2.4 Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

2.5 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who had complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else’s complaint.

## **3. Recruitment and Selection**

3.1 The PLS aim to ensure that no trainee applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. The recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the placement and are not disproportionate.

3.2 Trainee advertisements will avoid using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. A short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy shall be sent on request to those who enquire about trainee opportunities.

3.3 The PLS will take steps to ensure that its training programme is advertised to a diverse labour market and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented.

3.4 Applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a placement offer is made. There are limited exceptions which the PLS may use, for example:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments);
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment;
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons;
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

3.5 Applicants will not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants will not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without first considering whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account.

3.6 The PLS is required by law to ensure that all trainees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective trainees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce

original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. A list of acceptable documents is available from the PLS

3.7 To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in the schools, the PLS will monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their training.

Analysing this data helps us to take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

#### **4. Recruitment of ex-offenders**

4.1 The PLS is an organisation that uses the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)/ Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) service to assess candidates' suitability for positions of trust working in an environment with children and young people. The PLS complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice/ISA, and undertakes to treat all candidates fairly.

4.2 The PLS undertakes not to discriminate unlawfully against any candidate who is required to provide information (a Disclosure) through this process. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent a candidate from working with the PLS. Whether or not it does, will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

4.3 The PLS's policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders will be made available to all candidates at the outset of the recruitment process. The PLS and schools will ensure that it makes any candidate who is subject to Disclosure aware of the CRB Code of Practice and will provide a copy of the Code on request.

4.4 As a disclosure is part of the PLS's recruitment process, the schools encourage all candidates called to interview to provide details of any criminal record at any early stage of the application process. The PLS and schools requests that this information is sent under separate confidential cover to a designated person within the schools who may vary in case to case depending on the nature of the post being recruited. The PLS guarantees that only those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process will see this information.

4.5 Unless the nature of the position is such that the PLS may ask questions about an individual's entire criminal record, the PLS will only ask about "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

4.6 The PLS will ensure that it discusses with the candidate the relevance of any offence to the training in question. A candidate's failure to reveal information directly relevant to the job could result in withdrawal of an offer of employment.

#### **5. Trainee training**

5.1 All trainees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the programme

5.2 Where appropriate the PLS will take steps to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

## **6. Disability Discrimination**

6.1 If a trainee is disabled, or becomes disabled, in the course of his or her training programme, he or she is encouraged to tell us about his or her condition. This is to enable us to support the trainee as much as possible.

6.2 If a trainee experiences difficulties at work because of his or her disability, he or she may wish to contact the Co-Directors to discuss any reasonable adjustments to his or her working conditions or duties which he or she considers to be reasonable and necessary or which would assist in the performance of his or her duties. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where reasonable, practicable and proportionate in all the circumstances of the case.

6.3 Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it would not be reasonable for the PLS to accommodate a particular adjustment and in such circumstances it will ensure that it provides the trainee with its reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

7.5 The PLS will monitor the physical features of its schools' premises to consider whether they place disabled trainees at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonably practicable and proportionate the PLS will take steps to improve access for disabled trainees.

## **7 Complaints of Discrimination, Victimisation and Harassment on the Protected Characteristics**

7.1 The PLS will treat seriously and will take action where appropriate concerning all complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation on any of the protected characteristics made by any of its trainees

7.2 Any trainee who considers that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, victimised or harassed within the meaning of this policy should discuss the matter in the first instance with the Co-Directors. In some cases it may be possible to resolve the matter informally and reach a satisfactory resolution.

7.3 If a trainee wishes to make a formal complaint then he or she should follow the PLS's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

7.4 If a trainee is accused of unlawful discrimination, victimisation or harassment, The PLS will investigate the matter fully. In the course of the investigation the trainee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation and provide an explanation for his or her actions.

7.5 If the PLS concludes that the claim is false or malicious then the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action.