THE
BEDFORD
COLLEGE
GROUP

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
Annual Report
2021 – 2022

Introduction

Colleges have a statutory duty to produce an annual report under the specific responsibilities of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED); this is a key measure of the Equality Act 2010. The broad aims of this duty are to work towards;

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- Fostering good relations between different groups

- Advancing equality of opportunity

Our main documents for driving improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are:

- Single Equality Scheme and action plan;

- Race Equality action plan;

- LGBTQ+ action plan;

- Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans

EDI at the Bedford College Group

The Bedford College Group is committed to supporting and promoting equity of opportunity in all aspects of college life. We encourage everyone to embrace the differences they encounter here. We are home to people from many cultures and backgrounds; and a range of beliefs and identities.

Our college is strongly opposed to discrimination, unfairness and injustice. We believe in treating everyone fairly and celebrating our differences. We do not tolerate language or behaviour that makes others uncomfortable. This includes being treated differently because of any of the 'nine protected characteristics' of the Equality Act (2010) which are protected by law from discrimination (age, disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation). Alongside the Equality Act (2010) we have taken into consideration our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011).

Governors and senior leaders have an active involvement in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The board has an EDI update at every meeting

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

This committee is chaired by the Deputy CEO with representatives from all functions and the Board. It identifies priorities, challenges, practices and the development of EDI, in particular where progress is limited or in support of underrepresented or disadvantaged individuals or groups. It monitors the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan and the Race Equality and LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plans

Equality Impact Assessment

The Bedford College Group considers the needs of all individuals (staff, learners and visitors) when shaping policy, hosting events, delivering services and recruiting staff. Our new EIA process has ensured that our decision-making is robust, transparent and that we have fully considered the impact of our proposals on all minoritised groups. We are then able to record how our decision making is underpinned by inclusion and carried out using an EDI lens.

Diversity Ambassadors

We have a network of EDI Ambassadors who represent EDI in every department in the organisation. Their role is to ensure EDI issues are discussed and kept high on the agenda for their teams. They aim to model inclusive behaviour to other staff and students, confidently challenging actions and language that could be seen as discriminatory. They also encourage the celebration of diversity in their departments and share examples of good practice across the organisation.

Staff Diversity Forums

There are four distinct staff diversity networks (Employee Resource Groups) – DisAbility Advisory Forum, LGBTQ+ Forum, Race Equality Forum and Women's Staff Network;

The group members, led by nominated co-chairs, have provided a sounding board for college improvements in relation to gender non-binary inclusion, adjustments in the use of PPE, digital accessibility, staff recruitment, progression and development, menopause and a system for anonymous raising of concerns;

The groups initiate activities and recommendations based around the protected characteristics. For example, the LGBTQ+ Forum this year expanded the number of LGBTQ+ Support Advocates through dedicated training sessions

Executive Sponsors

Executive Sponsors are senior leaders who have self-nominated to act as EDI champions for disability, race equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion and women

The Executive Sponsors have provided a voice for the staff diversity forums and supported recommendations for improvements of inclusion at the Bedford College Group

EDI Information, Materials and Support

There is an EDI information hub on the staff intranet which includes videos, guides and articles on anti-racism, advocacy, accessibility, gender stereotypes, intersex inclusion, culture and faith guides for the education sector

Bedford College Group Diversity Calendar which includes all significant cultural and awareness dates for the academic year

We update all staff and raise awareness of inclusion and diversity through monthly EDI updates, and an EDI column in each monthly edition of the Connect staff magazine ;

We have online forums for the Diversity Ambassadors and the staff diversity groups;

We provide access to an Employee Assistance Programme, which is a free and confidential helpline for support and guidance on topics such as Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health, Menopause, Finances, Family, Bereavement, Guidance on COVID-19, Addiction, Stress, anxiety and depression.

EDI Professional Development for Staff

We have developed a comprehensive EDI training programmes. Some are a core part of staff induction/probation, and some are bookable training sessions available to all teams or individuals. These include;

- LGBTQ+ Awareness
- Black History
- Neurodiversity
- EDI confidence in the classroom
- Inclusive Language (avoiding 'banter')
- Meaningful Gender Inclusion
- Introduction to Diversity
- The Inclusive Workplace
- Minority Anxiety
- Unconscious Bias

Student Commission on Racial Justice

The Bedford College group has been involved in this special project for two years. Our students have worked alongside students from 10 other colleges across the country to address the inequalities that culturally minoritised groups experience in everyday life in the UK. The project highlighted a number of issues that reflected to the aims of our Race Equality Action Plan. We recognise that people from marginalised groups face a number of disadvantages in life, and it is simply not enough to 'not be racist' as an organisation – but to be actively anti-racist in everything we do. We felt that being involved in this project aligned with that.

Our plan is for all staff to develop an understanding of racism and the impact that it has on everyone's life. Our own students created and delivered a workshop to key people in the organisation and is now being rolled out as core training for all staff. We believe it will give staff and students the skills and confidence to talk about racism – but also to challenge inappropriate language and behavior in relation to all types of discrimination.

EDI in the Curriculum

EDI is embedded in curriculum. Each subject promotes equality and diversity in relation to their own unique area of work. Examples of good practice include;

- A continuation of the 'Black Heroes' project where art students created portraits of their heroes.

- In Performing Arts, learners are working towards a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream which plays with the traditional gender roles

- ESOL students had their first ever dedicated LGBTQ+ Awareness session which challenged notions of gender and sexuality in the international context

- T-level business students started planning what makes an inclusive workplace, taking into consideration the harmful effects of 'workplace banter'.

- Sixth Form students delivered a train the trainer session to some members of staff about black history and racism in the UK.

- In induction, tutorials and enrichment activities and celebrations of key dates from the diversity calendar e.g. Black History Month, LGBT History Month, International Women's Day;

- The LIVE Blue Table Talks are designed to be in-keeping with significant months and awareness days throughout the academic year

External Recognition

Stonewall Gold Champion

The Bedford College Group continues to work within our Gold champion status for LGBTQ+ inclusion in collaboration with Stonewall. This status has led to the formation of the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan and Working Group which continues to set meaningful targets for inclusion relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. We have continued to ensure that everyone feels welcome and safe to be themselves; and can live as their authentic self regardless of their identity. We have since worked with other FE providers to support them in their LGBTQ+ Awareness journey.

Equality Trailblazer

In October 2022 The Bedford College Group were recognised as an equality trailblazer by the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce for our commitment to EDI. This prestigious award demonstrates that we have put EDI at the heart of our organisation and embedded it within our culture.

Commended College for Diversity
AoC Beacon Awards 2022

The National Centre for Diversity's Award for Inclusive Learning Leadership category is one of 12 examined under the AoC scheme and all those commended have all demonstrated "a high level of innovation, impact and sustainability." The extensive work this College has undertaken includes making EDI training compulsory for every new member of staff and providing all employees with ongoing access to professional development in these areas. We are now using innovative approaches and applying these to inclusion work for other protected characteristics, focussing next on race equality.

Demographic Profile

Students

- The student demographic profile broadly matches the communities we serve. In the 21/22 academic year, 16.1% of students stated that they were either Black, Asian or Mixed/Dual Heritage. 70.8% of students were White British, and 10.4% were White (other).

- 17.7% of students told us that they had a Special Educational Need or Disability. 80.4% of students did not declare a disability.

- A small number of students (0.3%) told us that they did not identify as the binary genders of male or female. 2.9% of students stated that they were either gay, lesbian or bisexual.

- 14.8% of students told us that they have a religion or belief.

Staff

- 60% of core staff are female and 40% are male.

- In terms of ethnicity, 85% of staff told us that they are from white backgrounds (including White British, Irish, European or other). The largest group among other ethnicities is British Asian Indian at 3%.

- A majority of core staff identify of heterosexual (87%). 9% preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation.

- 12% of staff declared that they have a disability.

- In relation to religion or belief, 35% of staff told us they are Christian. 25% have no religion, a further 12% are atheist and 10% are Catholic.

Achievement - 21-22

In many cases students from ethnic minority background out perform white British students, this includes Other mixed which in the previous year was lower and in 21/22 was 3.2% higher than White British students. However there are three groups where there is more than a 4% gap, these are Caribbean students whose outcomes were -4.2% lower than White British, White /Black Caribbean whose outcomes were 7.7% lower and Irish students whose outcomes were 11.9% lower. More investigation is being carried out on these groups and actions will be put in place to close the gap.

There is less than 2% gap for achievement between male and female, female students achievement was 80.8% and male 78.6%.

For students with a declared disability/difficulty there is a gap of 6% with students with declared disability/difficulty, however on drilling down this is mainly linked to achievement in English and maths.

Performance against previous Equality targets
Single Equality Scheme 2018-22

We aimed **to improve headline achievement** for students with disabilities and those from culturally minoritised groups (ethnic minority groups). Alongside a national trend most culturally minoritised groups have made remarkable progress in achievement. Discrimination/bias is most commonly felt in relation to their future pay and careers. We have broadened this objective to now include improving achievement across all protected characteristics.

There has also been considerable progress in relation to '**the safety and wellbeing of students across all protected characteristics**'. Identity-based bullying continues to be rare, and students with protected characteristics continue to feel safe at college.

The final equality target related to staff. There have been a range of improvements in staff recruitment including the anonymisation of application forms and the introduction of an independent panel member for interviews. These have informed some of our new objectives relating to the further **debiasing of staff recruitment** as well as ensuring the current workforce feel included and have a sense of belonging

New Single Equality Scheme 2022-24

Vision

Our aim is that no student, member of staff, volunteer, governor, parent, or any other stakeholder will encounter discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic. They would also not be subjected to inappropriate, unwanted, unwelcome, upsetting or embarrassing language or behaviours based on individual differences they have. The upholding of our Single Equality Scheme is the responsibility of everyone.

The Bedford College group aim to provide a welcoming, friendly and safe environment for all, where every person should have the opportunity for full involvement in what takes place, and everyone's contribution to college should be valued and respected. We are committed to making all college facilities accessible, including resources, communications and activities that are free of stereotypes that promote the ethos of equity, diversity and inclusion.

New EDI Priorities

Our new approach to EDI reflects an stronger stance on discrimination and bias. There is a continuation and enhancement of the targets related to student achievement, wellbeing and staff diversity. In addition to these areas, we have set targets around inclusive leadership and governance, professional development, race equality and LGBTQ+ issues.

New EDI Priorities

Objective 1: Close the achievement gaps for all protected characteristics

EDIMs (Equality & Diversity Impact Measures)

1. Improved achievement for learners from mixed/dual heritage and Caribbean backgrounds. This may include strategies around extra tutorials, extra support, mentoring and the formation of distinct student activity groups (for culture)

2. Improved achievement for specific subject areas with large numbers of diverse students. This may include strategies based around student recruitment processes and EDI focus groups

3. Improved achievement for apprentices from culturally minoritised groups

Objective 2: Ensure the safety and wellbeing of students across all protected characteristics.

EDIMs:

1. The rates for recorded bullying incidents are comparable for all protected characteristics and are broken down by type (homophobic, transphobic etc) with clarity around the reason for the bullying.

2. Students know how to report bullying (particularly those who may be in a more vulnerable group). This would include the reporting of bullying related to gender (and sexual harassment, incel)

3. Students are advocates for each other and actively support each other's inclusion, differences and wellbeing.

4. Disciplinaries for black male students are comparable to the rates with other types of students.

Objective 3: Ensure the debiasing of staff recruitment and create a sense of belonging for current workforce.

EDIMs:

1. New staff recruitment strategies are fair, effective and working. These include anonymisation of applications, and an independent panel member at interviews.

2. There is an understanding of the content and patterns in the reasons different types of people leave the college (including by different types of roles)

3. Pay gaps are reduced (including the gap between highest and lowest paid people – and job families). This would include gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

4. There is an equitable workforce who have a good experience at work and feed back frankly about inclusion at the Bedford College Group

Objective 4: Create strategies for inclusive leadership and governance

EDIMs:

1. There is evidence of good career progression for those from minoritised and under-represented groups

2. Leaders are measured in relation to their contribution to EDI

3. The College promotes and shares its EDI work externally through research, publications, memberships and engagement with wider community initiatives

4. Senior leaders and governors have accessed EDI training and/or qualifications that support and develop their understanding of discrimination and social justice.

Objective 5: Develop high quality EDI based training for staff

EDIMs

1. The development of EDI practices are utilised and managers know how to look for EDI in observations (for example)

2. Inclusive language (inappropriate banter) training is undertaken by all staff

3. Meaningful Gender Inclusion Training is undertaken by all staff

4. Black History workshops are undertaken by all staff and rolled out to students

Objective 6: Promote and maintain an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ staff and students

- Please see **LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan**

Objective 7: Establish The Bedford College Group as an anti-racist organisation

- Please see **Race Equality Action Plan**