



Valuing
teamwork



Improving
continuously



Student
centred



Inclusive



Open
and caring



Nurturing
educational
excellence



THE
BEDFORD
COLLEGE
GROUP

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report 2022 – 2023



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 and monitor progress against the single equality scheme closely.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

This committee is chaired by the Deputy CEO with representatives from all functions at a senior level 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. Following the merger with Central Bedfordshire College the committee has been expanded to ensure there is memberships from all individual Colleges within the Group.

In 2022/23 the Committee has had assurance on areas such as:

- The analysis of staff recruitment by gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation showed no pattern of inequality or evidence of unconscious bias.
- Guidance has been provided on standards of Reflection rooms in all sites.
- The EDI curriculum standards have been reviewed with curriculum leads, they have been used to inform narrative in SARs.
- LGBTQ+ experiences of education by our students.
- Two members of staff have completed the first Diversity in Leadership Programme. There are three staff participating in 23/24 - where each college is represented.
- The four staff forum groups continue to work with the College to lead to a more inclusive environment. Three additional Groups have been implemented, these are the Men's health forum, Multi faith network and Unity Forum (a general EDI staff group)
- The Group was included on 25th March which is the International Day of Remembrance for the victims of the Atlantic Slave Trade. There were a number of events and activities taking place in Luton, Bedford and Northampton.
- The Group were finalists for an Annual Apprenticeship Award in relation to our commitment to inclusion.

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 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 through 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 have been four distinct staff diversity networks (Employee Resource Groups) – DisAbility Advisory Forum, LGBTQ+ Forum, Race Equality Forum and Women’s Staff Network. In 2022/23 the number of networks was increased to six with Men’s Health forum and Multi faith Group.

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, men’s health and multi faith. 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.

The Bedford College Group Diversity Calendar which includes all significant cultural and awareness dates for the academic year is also published to all staff.

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.

In addition we have online forums for the Diversity Ambassadors and the staff diversity groups including the Unity forum for all chairs of the staff network 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 continue to have a strong and comprehensive EDI training programme. 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.

EDI in the Curriculum

EDI is embedded in the curriculum. The EDI in Curriculum standards has been reviewed and updated in 2022/23 and each Principal provides an update on progress to the EDI Committee.

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

- Pride month and LGBTQ+ resources were championed in Sport, Hair and Childcare, for example. The introduction of a Culture Day inspired so many staff and students to take part and work collaboratively to express and value identities through designing posters, sharing authentic recipes and food, designing quizzes and c-creating traditional music playlists.
- In Art & Design in Bedford 'In conversation with an employee of Department of Education surveying current skills in the department, they had been informed that certain resources such as chemical photography were defunct processes, but upon seeing examples of the potential diversity on idea development had a pleasant change of opinion. This champions the departments' philosophy in presenting students to



techniques and processes that are contemporary, historical and experimental to give a more rounded, beneficial education’.

- Level 3 Business students in Bedford put on a Diversity Day in March as part of their managing an event assessment. This was a lively, well attended event show-casing many countries and their religion, language, food and geography.
- In care & Childcare in Bedford there are effective department displays and events linked to key concepts (vocational) and also linked to wider curriculum and enrichment e.g. cultural events and college values. This has a wider impact on skills for life and social conscience. Positive feedback from students and parents on displays such as Pride and Mental Health awareness. Positive feedback from QR discussion and report.
- The Computing Department in Bedford is a multi-cultural team and encourages and celebrates the diverse nature of its staff and students. As an example, a number of staff and students found it difficult to get to their mosque for Friday prayers, and be back in time for lessons. Therefore a room was set aside for them to use together in Friday prayers. This has proven to be very successful.
- Focusing on female directors in media, gender dynamics in performing arts, and world music in music education can address representation issues within these fields. It introduces students to underrepresented voices and provides them with a more comprehensive understanding of the subjects. The impact of creatively integrating EDI principles across departments and embedding engaging material is far-reaching, touching on aspects of education, inclusivity, career preparation, and the overall reputation of the department
- In the LRC’s, duplication of EDI themed events and displays across the group clearly identifies the department as championing EDI. Ambassadors engaged with the EDI team, regular reports in all-team meetings, keyword cataloguing of EDI themed books and resources, and the purchase and maintenance of EDI stock and reading lists offers a growing and high-quality resource and a meaningful contribution in this area. Specific resources are available to support students with dyslexia, for example, and noise cancelling headphones are available at all sites to support students who may be susceptible to overstimulation
- 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.

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.

Colleagues from the student Commission on Racial Justice have also been into College to lead workshops with staff and students on a range of topics relating to Race equality. One of the changes the Group has made following these workshops is a review of the student disciplinary policy, a panel that must be diverse has been introduced to hear potential exclusion meetings relating to poor behaviour.

External Recognition

The Group has had more focus in the last year on sharing what we do in EDI and this work has been recognized with several external awards.

These have included our continuing work with Stonewall as a School & College Gold champion. We were awarded the Equality Trailblazer award from Bedford Chamber of Commerce and were announced AOC Beacon Award for Inclusive Learning Leadership. We have been named as a finalist for the Northampton Business awards for our work on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

The Deputy CEO (Education) has been announced as chair the AOC Diversity Reference Group.

External Recognition



- The student demographic profile broadly matches the communities we serve. In the 22/23 71.1% of students were White British, and 8.3% compared to 10.4% in 21/22 were White (other).
- 22.1% compared to 17.7% in 21/22 of students told us that they had a Special Educational Need or Disability. 76.7% compared to 80.4% 21/22 of students did not declare a disability.
- 3.8% compared to 2.9% in 21/22 of students stated that they were either gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- 31.8% compared to 14.8% in 21/22 of students told us that they have a religion or belief.



Staff

- 65% of core staff are female and 35% are male, this has moved from 60% & 40% following the merger with Central Beds College.
- In terms of ethnicity, 71% against 85% in 22/23 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 Pakistani at 4%.
- Core staff identify as heterosexual (53%). 5% preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation and 40% are unknown.
- 8% of staff declared that they have a disability.
- In relation to religion or belief, 31% of staff told us they are Christian. 21% have no religion.

Achievement - 22-23

In many cases students from ethnic minority background out perform white British students, this includes Arab, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Irish, not provided, other, other Black, and other White. No Minority backgrounds that have not performed as well as White British are more than 4% difference which is a key target in the single equality scheme.

There is 1.1% gap for achievement between male and female which an improvement from last year, female students' achievement was 81.6% and male 80.5%. For 16-18 students the gap is 0.1% between male and female students.

For students with a declared disability/difficulty the gap has closed from a gap of 6% with students with declared disability/difficulty in 2021/22 to a gap of 2.4% in 2022/23, however on drilling down this is mainly linked to achievement in English and maths functional skills.

The delivery model of English and maths in Bedford College and Tresham College will be focused on GCSE with more small group workshops introduced alongside online resources students can access to support their learning.

Our Vulnerable group of learner retention for Northampton and Bedfordshire was 1.4% above the college average, and attendance 0.8%, demonstrating that the support put in place is effective.

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 approach to EDI reflects a 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.