

Equality and Diversity Policy

May 2011

1.1. Policy Statement

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and providing a supportive and inclusive environment. We are proud of our continuing commitment to widening participation and this commitment extends to students, staff and other people who have dealings with us.

1.2 Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to communicate our commitments to equality and diversity by defining:

- (i) The expectations of all Mountview students and staff within this area.
- (ii) The key principles of equality and diversity.
- (iii) Our strategic priorities.
- (iv) Our arrangements for reporting of incidents and monitoring complaints.

1.3 Supporting Policies and Procedures

This policy is designed to be used in conjunction with a number of existing Mountview policies and procedures. These include:

- (i) Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan
- (ii) Staff and Student Handbooks
- (iii) Health and Safety Policy
- (iv) Our Student Charters

1.4 Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all Mountview employees, students, freelance workers and contractors. It supersedes all previous Equal Opportunities policies.

2.1 Definition of Equality

Equality does not mean treating everyone in the same way. People may, for example, have different needs and requirements from us.

For the purposes of this policy, equality is defined as providing 'equality of opportunity'.

2.2 Legal Status

As of April 2011, Mountview has a legal obligation to provide 'equality of opportunity' to nine groups of people¹ who hold 'protected characteristics'.²

These characteristics are defined as people who have different:

- 1) **Genders.** Men and women.
- 2) **Races.** All racial groups.
- 3) **Religions or Beliefs.** This includes certain non religious belief systems.
- 4) **Sexual Orientations.** Heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual.
- 5) **Ages.**
- 6) **Marital Status.** Single, married, divorced, in a civil partnership etc.
- 7) **Disabilities.** Physical and mental.

Protected characteristics also include:

- 8) People who have **Changed their Gender.** Transsexual people.
- 9) People who are **Pregnant** or absent in connection with childbirth.

1: 'People' are Mountview employees, students, job applicants, course applicants, freelancers, contractors and members of the public who have dealings with us.

2: Protected characteristics are defined by *The Equality Act 2010*.

2.3 Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as “*Less favourable treatment to a person (or persons) that is not capable of being justified*”. It is unlawful to discriminate against any person on the grounds of their ‘*Protected characteristics*’. (See overleaf.) Note that discrimination can occur in many different ways. This includes:

2.3.1 Direct Discrimination

For example deliberately selecting only female students for a course.

2.3.2 Indirect Discrimination.

Where our policies or activities *indirectly* affect people who have different ‘*Protected Characteristics*’. E.g. Asking students to put a complaint in writing may indirectly discriminate against people with certain disabilities as they may find this request harder to comply with than non disabled students.

2.3.3. Harassment.

This can be unwanted conduct which affects the dignity of staff or students in their workplace or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment includes acts performed by third parties e.g. members of the public, contractors etc.

2.3.4 By Association

For example, where a white student is harassed by other students because she is in a relationship with a black student.

2.3.5 Victimisation

For example, where a member of staff is persecuted by a line manager for making a complaint about another employee’s behaviour.

2.3.6 By Perception

For example, where a student is perceived to be gay / not gay and is teased about it - irrespective of the student’s actual sexual orientation.

2.4 Statutory Duty to Promote Equality

Mountview also has a statutory (legal) duty to 'promote' equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination as defined by *The Equality Act Public Sector Duty 2011*.

'Promote' can be defined as taking proactive measures to prevent discrimination occurring in the first place and fostering good relations between people who share different 'Protected characteristics'.

We have identified **Five Strategic Priorities** to allow us to promote Equality and Diversity within Mountview. Our strategic priorities and our corresponding actions are listed within our *Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan* document.



Fig 1. Mountview Strategic Priorities to promote Equality and Diversity

3.0 Definition of Diversity

Diversity is defined as recognising and embracing the differences that exist amongst us all – both inside and outside of the legal framework.

We want Mountview to be an inclusive environment which respects backgrounds and differences irrespective of, for example, socio or economic status, pastimes, choice of clothing etc.

4.0 Expectations of all Mountview Staff and Students

➔ We expect all Mountview staff, students, freelancers and contractors to: ←

- (i) Uphold the principles of this policy.**
- (ii) Challenge behaviour which may marginalise or exclude others.**
- (iii) Report behaviours or actions that contravene this policy.**

4.1 As detailed within our staff handbook, Mountview will not accept any acts of discrimination or harassment towards students, staff or other people who have dealings with us. Committing or condoning such acts may be considered as gross misconduct and dealt with via our disciplinary procedures.

5.0 Responsibilities for Equality and Diversity within Mountview

Everyone who has a connection with us shares responsibility for promoting equality and diversity. A summary of key responsibilities is shown below.

| Group: | Responsible for: |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Mountview Board Members | Ensuring the Academy follows all equality and diversity policies and achieves planned objectives. |
| Principal and Deputy Principal | <p>Demonstrating visible commitment to promoting equality and diversity within the Academy.</p> <p>Development of equality and diversity policies, procedures, strategies and action plans. Monitoring and reviewing our progress.</p> |
| Mountview Staff | <p>Putting our policies into practice.</p> <p>Promoting equality and diversity in all of our activities – for example within auditions, teaching and assessments.</p> <p>Reducing achievement gaps between different groups of students.</p> <p>Adhering to policies and procedures in respect of complaints of discrimination and harassment.</p> |
| Mountview Students | <p>Respecting others in their language, actions and behaviours.</p> <p>Adhering to our equality and diversity policies and Academy charters.</p> <p>Reporting inappropriate behaviour and actions.</p> |

6.0 Complaints:

Any student or staff member may raise a complaint either formally or informally using existing complaints procedures within Mountview.

These are detailed on page 31 of our staff handbook and page *tbc* of the student handbook.

We will monitor complaints made within the Academy by equality groups as part of our commitment to promote equality. Please see page nine of our *Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan* document.

Complaints made by applicants or members of the public should be addressed to the Principal.

7.0 Justifiable Discrimination in Decision Making

As a leading drama school, we are, at times required to make decisions, particularly in respect of our students, that may, on the face of it, appear to be discriminatory.

However, such decisions are often capable of being justified in pursuance of the 'legitimate aims' of the Academy.

| Example: | Justification: |
|---|--|
| Inviting only male students to audition for the part of Joseph in a production of <i>Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</i> . | A male actor is required for reasons of authenticity. Similar rules excluding men would apply when casting a female part. |
| Declining a student's application to the Academy for a musical theatre programme on the grounds that the applicant demonstrates a low musical ability during auditions. | The audition process is an objective assessment of talent and skills. Any student – irrespective of their background, could fail an audition on the grounds of ability. |
| Selecting a female member of staff to be responsible for stage make up in a female dressing room. | It is reasonable to conclude that a female is required for reasons of decency. It is also reasonable to assume that female students would object to the presence of a male in such circumstances. |
| Advertising Mountview programmes in a magazine predominantly read by black minority ethnic people. | As part of our duty to promote equality, it is sometimes necessary to target certain groups that are under represented. Providing we are advertising our courses in other 'mainstream' publications, this action is justifiable. |

This list is, of course, not exhaustive. If you are in any doubt as to whether a process or decision is discriminatory, you should refer the matter to the Principal or Deputy Principal for further consideration.