



Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018 – 2019

1. Introduction

This report demonstrates how the Bedford College Group (BCG) is meeting the public sector general and specific equality duties, and provides evidence that we show due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fostering good relations between different groups
- Advancing equality of opportunity.

The report, which is produced by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, includes data sets for 2018-19 and provides evidence on progress towards the College's equality priorities.

2. Highlights for individual protected characteristics (learners and staff)

Disability

The overall achievement for our students with a declared disability, learning difficulty or health condition was higher than the national rates for this group of learners (+2%).

The achievement for our High Needs learners was higher in comparison to the rest of the learner cohort on FE programmes (+0.7%) which is an improvement from 2017/18 (by 3.8%).

As a member of the Disability Confident scheme, the BCG has policies in place to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace.

The BCG offers an employee assistance programme for a free confidential information, advice and counselling service designed to help all employees and their family with personal problems and with work-related concerns.

The staff development in mental health awareness and support has been a key focus:

- A rolling programme in Mental Health First Aid was completed by 32 staff members and this training will continue throughout 2019-20;
- Localised training and sessions with mental health and well-being themes were well attended at the Staff Conference in July 2019;
- We are working towards meeting the requirements of the AoC Mental Health Charter.

Ethnicity

The learner achievement for ethnicities with the biggest cohorts in the BCG – African, White Other and English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British - was above the NRs (+0.9%, +4.1% and +2.7% respectively). In comparison to the White British cohort in the BCG, achievement gaps bigger than our equality measure of -4% existed for a small number of ethnicities within the multiple or dual ethnic heritage (Mixed) group: White/Asian, White/Black African and Other mixed/multiple ethnic.

In apprenticeships, the achievement gap between White British and learners from other ethnic backgrounds (BAME) has closed to -0.8%, which is smaller than our equality measure of -2%.

The ethnic diversity of our Governing Body has increase by 36% since last year as a result of a targeted recruitment strategy to ensure that the Board is representative of the demographic profile of the local community.

Gender

For all learners, the achievement for females and males is above the NRs (females +3.1% and males +1.2%).

Our pay audit shows that the mean gender pay gap in the BCG has reduced from last years' snapshot by 3.1%. The pay gap is also smaller than the pay gap in the education sector and the gaps identified by other Colleges in the region and nationally.

The Advanced Engineering Centre in Bedford was named after the first woman member of the Institution of Civil Engineers Dorothy Buchanan. The state-of-the-art facilities are a great learning space as well as a venue for events such as Women in STEM.

Sexual orientation and transgender

Our work in promoting LGBT+ inclusion has been recognised by Stonewall with a School Champion Silver Award upon which we are building to achieve the Gold Award.

We have made an exceptional progress in the area of LGBT inclusion which is evident in the wide range of initiatives aiming to promote positive images of LGBT+ identities, challenge stereotypes, tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and develop understanding of LGBT history:

- The student tutorial programme includes themes such as LGBT+ awareness, relationships and gender identities;
- LGBTQIA+ groups and the Transform group (for trans* students) offer a social space for student interaction and support;
- In February we celebrated LGBT history month by having LGBT+ themed displays, quizzes, wearing badges with positive messages, and subject specific projects;
- We collaborate with local youth groups such as Q Alliance and Q Space for staff and student training, and for external student support for LGBT+ students;
- The Learning Recourse Centres have books and DVDs with LGBT themes and characters, and some of these are on prominent display during LGBT history month;
- All new buildings include gender neutral self-contained toilets, while the existing premises have self-contained accessibility toilets that are available for use by everybody regardless of their gender identity.

All our staff (teaching, pastoral and non-teaching) had the opportunity to develop their understanding of LGBT issues and identities through the 'LGBT+ awareness' session.

Individual members of staff were supported to attend external LGBT-related training, conferences and a coaching and mentoring programme for LGBT+ teachers which had a positive impact on their professional development, as well as has informed our practice and policy development in improving LGBT inclusion for staff and students.

In response to staff and students' feedback, we started a LGBT+ staff group which has grown to become an inclusive forum for LGBT+ people, allies and anyone with questions about LGBT issues. The group is working towards the launch of a voluntary pastoral role - LGBT+ support officer.

We developed a trans policy with guidance on supporting a trans student or a student who is transitioning to ensure the effective support for trans* individuals in the BCG.

Religion and belief

We have developed a Religion and Belief Policy Statement to ensure that there is no discrimination in the BCG on the grounds of religion, belief or lack of belief and to promote equality of opportunity for everyone irrespective of their belief system.

We introduced a number of activities aimed to develop staff and students' awareness of different faiths and beliefs and increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs:

- The inter-faith event in November 2018 demonstrated the similarities in the value systems between different faiths;
- Religious festivals and special dates of the main religions represented in the UK were highlighted in the monthly diversity updates and on the intranet;
- Guidance was issued on supporting Muslim staff and students during Ramadan;
- Information from the external Hate Crime awareness conference 'Bedford as One' led to training sessions on hate crime at the staff conference.

The BCG provides designated spaces for individual reflection, meditation and prayer for people of all faiths and beliefs, and none.

3. Performance against our equality priorities (2018-2022)

This section of the report summarises the progress against our equality measures. Detailed data sets on students and staff are provided in sections five (Our Learners) and six (Our Staff).

Equality Objective 1: Improve headline achievement rates for disability and ethnicity

By focusing on the needs of different groups of students, we want to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life. Student outcomes for groups of students who may be at a disadvantage (because of a disability, learning difficulty, health condition, ethnicity, gender or other vulnerabilities) are closely monitored at top level in-year and interventions are expected to be applied at a curriculum level.

Equality objective 1: Progress against the Equality and Diversity Impact Measures

1. Improve achievement for learners with a disability on full-time programmes to reduce difference to no more than 1% in comparison to achievement of learners with no disability

Outcome: In 2018/19 the difference in achievement between learners with a disability and no disability on FE programmes including maths and English has been reduced to -2.6% (from -2.9% in 2017/18), which is identical to the achievement gap in NRs between these groups of students. **Target not met**

2. Improve achievement for High Needs learners so there is no difference in comparison to achievement for full-time 16-18 learners

Outcome: In 2018/19 the achievement for High Needs learners was better in comparison to the rest of the cohort on FE programmes (+0.7%) which is a great improvement from 2017/18 (achievement gap -3.1%). **Target met**

3. Improve achievement for BAME learners on full-time programmes to reduce different outcomes by ethnicity to no more than 4% between White British and individual ethnicity categories

Outcome: In 2018/19 two ethnicity groups of learners on FE programmes including maths and English had lower achievement in comparison to White British learners: Mixed (-5.6%) who were 4.3% of all learners and Black (-2.8%) who were 5.7% of all learners.

Within the cohort of multiple or dual heritage learners (Mixed), the groups with a wider achievement gap than the equality measure of -4% were:

- White/Asian (-9.1%),
- White/Black African (-8%) and
- Other mixed/ Multiple Ethnic (-4.1%).

While the small cohort of individual ethnicities within the Mixed group would skew the results at top-level reporting, it is paramount to continue with our work in developing awareness of barriers for progress and achievement specific to learners of dual/multiple heritage and better understanding of the learner experience of minority groups in different curriculum settings.

Target not met

4. Improve timely achievement for BAME apprentices to reduce different outcomes by ethnicity to no more than 2% between White British and individual ethnicity categories

Outcome: The overall achievement gap between White British and BAME apprentices has closed in comparison to 2017/18 (from -4.3 to -0.8%). Within the BAME cohort there are some achievement gaps for individual ethnicity categories, however due to the very small number of learners in each category any substantive conclusions will be unreliable. **Target met**

Areas for improvement

To fine-tune the equality analysis of achievement gaps to ascertain specific areas for timely interventions.

To finalise the system for in-year data monitoring of learner retention and achievement by equalities in HE and apprenticeships.

To embed fully diversity and inclusion considerations in the quality intervention process for curriculum areas.

To establish a process for quick intervention in the departments needing support with regards to embedding of equality and diversity in teaching and learning and meeting the needs of all learners.

Equality Objective 2: Ensure the safety and well-being of students across all protected characteristics

The **student enhancement and experience** in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion support our equality objective to ensure the safety and well-being of learners across all protected characteristics and develop learners' skills to take part in life in the wider society.

Leaders and staff are committed to **maintain a safe and disciplined environment** within which students feel respected and recognised as individuals. Throughout their journey in the BCG, students have opportunities to develop positive behaviour and attitudes which are supported by a number of systems and procedures, for instance:

- Clear expectations of behaviour including zero tolerance on bullying is discussed with learners in their induction and reinforced throughout the learning programmes;
- Equality and diversity, British values, Prevent and safeguarding topics feature in the learner induction and are embedded in their tutorial programme;
- Respect, positive behaviour, and recognising and reporting bullying are highlighted in the Student Handbook and on posters;
- The information for parents on the website states our zero-tolerance approach to bullying and includes links to the Safeguarding and Anti-bullying policy.

We have **a good understanding of our learners' experience** in relation to equality factors through the following systems:

- We monitor the complaints on 'Have your say' for the impact on individual protected characteristics;
- We monitor the recorded bullying incidents and the disciplinary actions in relation to the protected characteristic and a summary of the monitoring is provided to the executive team and the governors for discussion and a steer for improvements;
- We gather feedback from student focus groups on LGBT, disability and ethnicities;
- We analyse students' views in the Student Satisfaction surveys by protected characteristics.

We respond to students' issues and concerns through a number of systems, such as 'You said – we did' posters; Moodle for students; Student Voice; and direct feedback through 'Have you say'.

Equality objective 2: Progress against the Equality and Diversity Impact Measures

1. The rates for recorded bullying incidents are comparable for all protected characteristics.

Outcome: Positive comments from the cross-college Student Survey show students' awareness of tolerance, respect and learning how to treat others. The results from the Student Union snapshot survey on bullying (Mar/Apr 2019) show that the majority of students knew how to report bullying and overall a high proportion of the surveyed students felt that the BCG deals with bullying issues well. **Target partially met.**

2. The rates for disciplinary actions (academic and behaviour) are comparable for disability-no disability, ethnicity groups, and males-females.

Outcome: At top level, the recorded disciplinary actions by disability, gender and ethnicity are broadly proportional with the overall student demographics for these protected characteristics. **Target partially met.**

3. The student satisfaction rates for feeling safe, as evidenced through student surveys, are comparable for students across all protected characteristics.

Outcome: The student feedback from the cross-college Student Survey shows high levels of satisfaction for feeling safe, and being treated fairly and with respect. Positive comments from individual students from the survey are indicative of the specific provision for students' needs. **Target met.**

Areas for improvement

To achieve high student satisfaction in the cross-college Student Survey for 'The College deals with bullying issues well' across all protected characteristics

To investigate reasons for disparities between departments for disciplined learners and work with curriculum areas to ensure that the anti-bullying and disciplinary processes are applied consistently across all curriculum departments.

To develop a system for the sharing of good practice in the area of equality and diversity via the Diversity Ambassadors and at learning lunches.

Equality Objective 3: Improve the data monitoring of our workforce to ensure advancing equality of opportunity

Equality objective 3: Progress against the Equality and Diversity Impact Measures

1. 95% of all staff records on iTrent are with completed personal information section incl. the 'prefer not to say' option.

Outcome: 100% of staff have provided either some or all their personal data, including people who have opted out of specific individual characteristics e.g. for sexual orientation. **Target partially met.**

2. The staff recruitment stages (application-shortlisting-interview-offer) are monitored for the range of protected characteristics.

Outcome: The recruitment process is managed through clear criteria for job vacancies which is used through the shortlisting and interview stages. The interview panels usually consist of three managers to ensure an equitable process for all candidates. The application and successful appointment stages are currently monitored for ethnicity annually. **Target partially met.**

3. The staff exit interviews are monitored for issues in relation to the protected characteristics.

Outcome: The current exit interview survey does not ask for information on protected characteristics. The new survey which is in development will include an equality and diversity section. **Target not met.**

Areas for improvement

To review how i-Trent can produce better workforce reports so that we can identify trends and highlight potential equality issues.

To continue to encourage staff to update their self-service profiles in i-Trent to ensure that data for the protected characteristics can be accurately reported.

To review our talent attraction methodology (as part of the wider People Strategy) to ensure that we are raising our profile amongst all of our communities.

4. Embedding equality and diversity into the Bedford College Group

Our main documents for driving improvements are:

- Single Equality Scheme that sets out our equality priorities and the manner in which it assesses its performance in this area;
- Single Equality Scheme Action Plan;
- Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans.

Leaders and governors promote equality of opportunity and diversity well which results in a positive learning environment. Governors and managers have an active involvement in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and ensure the updates of the Committee are shared at regular termly Board and Executive meetings.

The cross-college **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee** chaired by the Vice Principal (Quality) develops a Single Equality Scheme with our equality priorities and monitors the performance through a Single Equality Action Plan.

The Committee is effectively supported by **Diversity Groups** (Bedford and Tresham) with representatives from staff and students who are consulted on a range of inclusion and diversity issues. Responding to staff feedback, **a staff LGBT+ forum** was set up to provide another platform for engaging with staff on initiatives for improving staff and students' experience. We also collated staff's views at a staff conference stand 'Let's talk about diversity and inclusion' and identified actions for improvement in terms of staff and student experience. To promote positive attitudes towards diversity in the BCG community, we have created a badge 'The Bedford College Group Celebrating Diversity' that staff are encouraged to wear on their lanyards. We have introduced **a staff award Inclusion Champion** to recognise outstanding individuals who have made a real difference in the area of inclusion and diversity.

The clear commitment to effective **professional development for staff** in the area of diversity and inclusion is evident in a range of activities. All new staff complete a training module 'Positive about Equality and Diversity' in their probation. The mandatory equality and diversity refresher training for all staff 'LGBT+ Awareness' was delivered in response to feedback from staff and students. Equality and diversity related training and support was tailored to the needs of different groups of staff: for Personal Achievement Tutors (in Tutor Essentials), for new teachers (in Teacher Toolkit), for new Curriculum Managers, and for curriculum teams (in Golden Hour). Both curriculum and professional areas have a Diversity Ambassador who share monthly equality and diversity updates with their team to help all staff keep abreast with diversity and inclusion news, events and celebrations. The equality and diversity element at the annual staff conference included sessions on autism, ADHD, mental health, LGBT+ and hate crime.

The **feedback from staff training** (verbal, evaluation forms and as recorded on Moodle) indicates that the resources and professional development with a focus on diversity and inclusion has had a positive impact on staff's confidence and teachers' awareness for inclusive teaching practice and the embedding of equality and diversity. The feedback from the equality and diversity refresher training for staff 'LGBT Awareness' indicates that the participants have increased their knowledge of strategies to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language as a result of completing the training.

Our learners have multiple **opportunities to develop their understanding of inclusion and diversity, and core British values**, in their induction, tutorials and enrichment activities:

- Equality and diversity, British values, radicalisation, extremism and safeguarding were discussed with learners at their induction and in their tutorial programme;
- Key dates from the diversity calendar were celebrated through enhancement activities, displays and curriculum projects across the BCG e.g. Black History Month, World Mental Health Day, Inter-faith Week, LGBT History Month, Women's International Day, Autism and Deaf Awareness Weeks, and Safer Internet Day;
- Projects with equality and diversity themes were completed in individual subject areas, for instance: in Sport the students investigated gender stereotypes and their impact on different sports; in ESOL the students completed a research on LGBT+ issues; in Performing Arts the students did a production of Macbeth where the gender roles were switched; in Media the students created podcasts which explore the use of sexuality and gender in media products.
- A reoccurring positive theme from the learning walks and observations of teaching and learning was the respect that students showed for their teacher and peers.

The excellent **breadth of personal development activities** for students aims to promote an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all learners and to celebrate the diversity of the BCG community:

- Black History month was celebrated with displays at all campuses and over 500 students taking part in quizzes and tutorials;
- A collaboration with The Higgins (Art Gallery and Museum in Bedford) resulted in an exhibition at the Art & Design department 'Voices: Different Pasts, Shared Futures' and student debates to raise awareness of the challenge for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. At the celebration event in the Harper Suite, students from Music performed their original songs and students from Art & Design displayed their work, all of which gained high appraisal from the attending guests;
- World Mental Health day was marked with a 'Hello Yellow' themed day across the Tresham campuses with students wearing yellow and creating a mental health tips wall, handing out pocket size advice cards, which was aimed at challenging stereotypes and stigma around mental health;
- A breast cancer awareness campaign 'Wear It Pink' ran across the BCG with students and staff wearing pink and raising money for charities;
- Health and Wellbeing month had a 'Building a Better You' theme which featured a giant Lego man on tour and pop-up de-stress stations with Lego building and wellbeing colouring books to help student develop techniques in combating stress. Poster and info packs were distributed to students;
- The LGBTQIA+ student groups got involved in a variety of projects and events to celebrate LGBT history month and promote positive images of different sexualities and gender identities: a rainbow walkway and information day, the design and distribution of badges with messages of support for the LGBTQIA+ community, raising funds for a national LGBTQIA+ charity helpline with a cake sale, the update of the British Values posters to include students' own illustrations;
- With the aim to develop understanding of healthy relationships and sexual health, topics of sex, consent, sexual health, sexual orientation and gender identity were covered in tutorials. This included sessions ran by Q Space (LGBT+ youth support group) at the Tresham campuses;
- International Women's Day was celebrated across the BCG with displays, quizzes, a wall of inspirational quotes and students' selfies with their positive pledges for gender equality;
- The Sports England 'Fit to Achieve' project focusing on students with low-level mental health concerns continued to work with students from a variety of protected characteristics and those who self-identity as having a mental or physical disability. The activities have

- engaged over 1700 students in the project, and alongside the sport activities there were sessions on mental health resilience, self-esteem and confidence and self-identity;
- The student union equality and diversity reps helped to plan and deliver the Student Voice Conference, at which the opening speech covered identity-based harassment and bullying, empowerment and creating change. The students attending the conference devised a series of social media, video and poster campaigns against identity-based bullying which was a valuable learning experience for expanding their knowledge of challenging bullying and embracing difference;
 - Building on the success of last year's conference, the 'Hear me out' conference (October 2018) with the theme 'Friendship' was attended by local schools alongside college Deaf/hard of hearing students. The participants were joined by members of the police force who spoke about their personal experience of mental health difficulties and how friendships supported them in their time of need. Feedback from those attending included: 'It was good to meet new people and I loved that we swapped our friendship band' and 'It made me realise even though we are Deaf/hard of hearing we all have difference communication needs';
 - During the Deaf Awareness week in May 2019 Deaf students took part in a range of activities to increase understanding of Deaf inclusion. For instance, students from the BCG and local school attended an exhibition of deaf aids and equipment in The Higgins where older people from the Deaf community attended and talked about their experience.

We provided **support and guidance** to people with specific needs:

- Counselling sessions were offered across the BCG and mental health remained the main presenting issue for those students who were referred to and accessed the service;
- The Careers team offered advice via a range of channels, reviewed their Moodle page and updated their facilities with the aim to increase the accessibility of the service for users with different needs. The team also supported learners with application for bursaries, the Care2Learn scheme, external funding via Turn2Us and scholarships for HE.

We also take a **proactive approach with employers** that provide apprenticeships and work placements to our students. A Good Practice Guide 'Equality and Diversity in the workplace' is given to all employers we work with to make them aware of the employers' duties under current equality legislation, examples of harassment and bullying, and practical suggestions on encouraging equality and preventing discrimination. Our training and workplace co-ordinators ensure that young people are well supported in the workplace, including adjustments for any additional needs, and have opportunities to develop their skills in a work environment free from identity-based bullying and harassment.

The impact on groups of people, especially those with a protected characteristic, is considered consistently in our policy development and the improvement of accommodation and facilities via **equality impact assessments**. For instance, in 2018-19 the policies for Admissions, Anti-bullying, Learning, teaching and assessment, Emergency, closure and communications, Fire management, and the Wellingborough campus refurbishment plan were assessed for their impact on groups of people in relation to the protected characteristics.