



THORNTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Love • Respect • Ambition

EQUALITIES POLICY 2026–2027

1. Mission Statement

At Thornton Primary School, our mission is to ensure that **every child is valued, nurtured and inspired**.

We provide a caring, happy and safe environment in which every child is encouraged to develop their strengths, overcome barriers and achieve their potential.

Our values of **Love, Respect and Ambition** underpin every aspect of school life.

We believe that every child is unique. Equality therefore does not mean treating every child identically. It means understanding individual circumstances, identifying barriers, providing appropriate support and ensuring that every child has a genuine opportunity to succeed.

This is particularly important at Thornton Primary School, where we have a high proportion of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, alongside specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out Thornton Primary School's commitment to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advancing equality of opportunity;
- fostering good relations;
- removing or reducing barriers to learning, participation and achievement;
- making appropriate reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils;
- ensuring pupils with SEND are fully included and appropriately supported;
- promoting a culture in which difference is understood, valued and respected;
- maintaining high expectations for every pupil;
- ensuring equality informs teaching, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, curriculum, pastoral support and school improvement.



The policy applies to all pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers, volunteers, visitors, contractors and other members of the school community.

3. Equality at Thornton Primary School

At Thornton, **equity is central to our understanding of equality.**

We recognise that children have different starting points, strengths, experiences and barriers. Treating everyone in exactly the same way can therefore result in unequal outcomes.

Our approach is to provide **what each child needs to access the same opportunities and achieve ambitious outcomes.**

When making decisions, we may consider:

- age and stage of development;
- SEND and disability;
- communication and language needs;
- social, emotional and mental health needs;
- disadvantage;
- attendance;
- safeguarding and vulnerability;
- race and ethnicity;
- sex;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity where applicable;
- family circumstances;
- any other relevant individual circumstance.

This does not mean lowering expectations. **We maintain high expectations while adapting teaching, support and provision to remove barriers.**

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to have due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. The Act also establishes duties relating to reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

4. Our Values and Nurturing Ethos

Our commitment to equality is inseparable from our three school values.



Love

We care about every child as an individual. We seek to understand pupils' experiences, strengths, needs and barriers and provide the support they need to flourish.

Respect

We teach and model respect for ourselves, others and the wider community. We challenge prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, bullying and harassment.

Ambition

We believe that every pupil can learn, develop and achieve. SEND, disability, disadvantage or other barriers must never result in reduced expectations.

Our nurturing ethos recognises that relationships are fundamental to learning and wellbeing.

We understand that some children, particularly those with SEND and SEMH needs, may communicate distress, unmet needs or difficulties through their behaviour. Staff will seek to understand the underlying need while maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries.

This approach does not excuse harmful behaviour. It ensures that responses are **fair, proportionate, individualised and supportive of long-term change**.

5. Thornton Primary School in Context

Thornton Primary School is an inclusive school with a high level of SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

We provide specialist provision through **The Orchard**, our eight-place Key Stage 2 SEMH SEND Unit.

Pupils within The Orchard have EHCPs and require specialist teaching, therapeutic support and carefully adapted provision.

Our commitment to equality therefore includes ensuring that pupils receiving specialist provision remain valued members of the wider school community and have appropriate opportunities to participate in school life.

We recognise that SEND, disability, disadvantage, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and SEMH needs may interact.

We therefore consider the **whole child**, rather than viewing individual characteristics or needs in isolation.



6. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Equality Act 2010;
- Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Equality Act 2010 guidance for schools;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- statutory Relationships Education and Health Education requirements;
- relevant DfE guidance relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, SEND and inclusion.

KCSIE 2026 comes into force on **1 September 2026**.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 strengthens expectations around **anti-racist and anti-discriminatory safeguarding practice** and recognises that discrimination and previous experiences can affect children's and families' experiences of services.

The school will keep this policy under review as legislation and statutory guidance develop.

7. Protected Characteristics

The school recognises the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The application of particular protected characteristics differs according to whether the individual is a pupil, member of staff or another member of the school community.

The school will also challenge disadvantage and unfair treatment arising from circumstances that may not themselves constitute protected characteristics, including socioeconomic disadvantage, care experience, family circumstances, vulnerability and additional educational needs.



8. Equality, Safeguarding and Vulnerability

Equality and safeguarding are closely connected.

Thornton Primary School recognises that some pupils may be particularly vulnerable to:

- abuse;
- neglect;
- exploitation;
- bullying;
- harassment;
- discrimination;
- child-on-child abuse;
- online harm;
- social isolation.

Staff will consider whether a child's protected characteristic, disability, SEND, communication needs, disadvantage or vulnerability may affect their experience of safeguarding.

Particular care will be taken to ensure that a pupil's SEND or behaviour does not lead adults to overlook a safeguarding concern.

For example, staff will not assume that a change in behaviour is simply a manifestation of SEND or SEMH needs without considering whether there may be another underlying reason.

Where an equality concern also presents a safeguarding concern, **the school's safeguarding procedures will apply**. Staff will report concerns through the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and will not attempt to investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

9. Child-on-Child Abuse and Equality

The school recognises that child-on-child abuse, bullying, harassment and violence may be associated with protected characteristics, SEND, vulnerability or perceived difference.

This may include:

- physical abuse;
- bullying;
- sexual harassment;
- sexual violence;
- discriminatory abuse;



- racist abuse;
- disability-related harassment;
- sexist behaviour;
- homophobic, biphobic or other prejudicial behaviour;
- online abuse.

Such behaviour will **never be dismissed as 'banter', 'just a joke' or an inevitable part of childhood.**

All concerns will be taken seriously, appropriately recorded and considered through the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school will consider the needs and vulnerabilities of both the child who has experienced harm and the child responsible for the behaviour. However, the protection and safeguarding of children from harm remains paramount.

This approach is consistent with the wider KCSIE 2026 safeguarding framework and Working Together 2026's emphasis on anti-discriminatory practice.

10. SEND and Disability

SEND is central to our approach to equality.

Thornton Primary School will ensure that pupils with SEND:

- have access to an ambitious curriculum;
- receive high-quality teaching;
- benefit from adaptive teaching;
- have appropriate reasonable adjustments;
- are supported to participate fully in school life;
- have their strengths recognised;
- are listened to and involved in decisions affecting them;
- receive appropriate targeted and specialist support;
- have EHCP outcomes appropriately reflected in provision;
- develop independence wherever possible.

The school will not assume that a pupil with SEND cannot achieve highly.

Teaching will be adapted in response to pupils' needs through appropriate scaffolding, explicit instruction, modelling, questioning, checking for understanding, visual support, vocabulary development, concrete resources and other appropriate approaches.

The EEF's evidence base supports high-quality teaching as the foundation for supporting pupils with SEND, alongside carefully selected adaptations and additional support where required.



11. The Orchard, SEMH SEND Unit

The Orchard is an integral part of Thornton Primary School's inclusive provision.

It provides specialist support for eight Key Stage 2 pupils with EHCPs who require a higher level of specialist and therapeutic support.

Pupils in The Orchard will:

- be valued equally as members of Thornton Primary School;
- have ambitious educational and personal outcomes;
- receive specialist teaching;
- receive appropriate therapeutic support;
- have their sensory, communication and emotional needs understood;
- access an appropriately ambitious curriculum;
- be supported to develop independence;
- be supported to develop positive relationships;
- have appropriate opportunities to participate in wider school life;
- have carefully planned transitions;
- have their dignity and privacy respected.

The specialist nature of The Orchard does not diminish expectations. It enables the school to provide the relationships, adjustments and specialist approaches required for pupils to thrive.

12. Reasonable Adjustments

The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where required.

Adjustments may include:

- adapted teaching;
- visual resources;
- communication aids;
- sensory adaptations;
- additional processing time;
- changes to routines;
- alternative methods of recording;
- additional adult support;
- adapted assessment arrangements;
- reasonable adaptations to behaviour systems;
- support during transitions;
- adaptations to educational visits and enrichment activities.



Reasonable adjustments will be considered proactively rather than waiting for difficulties to become significant.

The school recognises that its duty to make reasonable adjustments is an important part of advancing equality for disabled pupils.

13. Teaching and Learning

All pupils have the right to high-quality teaching and ambitious learning.

Teaching will:

- maintain high expectations;
- use adaptive teaching;
- respond to evidence of pupil understanding;
- remove unnecessary barriers;
- provide appropriate scaffolding;
- promote independence;
- explicitly teach vocabulary where required;
- use appropriate visual and concrete resources;
- reflect a range of cultures and experiences;
- challenge stereotypes;
- promote positive attitudes towards disability;
- develop understanding of equality and diversity;
- enable all pupils to participate meaningfully.

The EEF's current work on inclusive teaching emphasises making deliberate adaptations to classroom teaching and using additional support where appropriate.

14. Curriculum and Representation

Our curriculum will promote:

- respect;
- equality;
- fairness;
- positive relationships;
- understanding of difference;
- disability awareness;
- cultural understanding;
- recognition of prejudice and discrimination;
- responsible citizenship.



Resources should:

- avoid stereotypes;
- represent a range of experiences;
- include positive representations of disability;
- include diverse role models;
- be accessible to pupils with SEND;
- be age and developmentally appropriate.

The school will ensure that curriculum provision remains consistent with statutory requirements for Relationships Education and Health Education.

15. Language and Communication

All adults will model respectful and inclusive language.

We will:

- challenge discriminatory language;
- challenge stereotypes and assumptions;
- avoid language which labels or diminishes pupils;
- use accurate and respectful terminology;
- support pupils to develop appropriate vocabulary;
- consider individual communication needs;
- use visual and alternative communication approaches where appropriate.

Discriminatory language will not be dismissed as 'banter' or 'just a joke'.

Responses will take account of age, developmental level, SEND, communication needs, understanding and intention while making clear that discriminatory language is unacceptable.

16. Behaviour, Relationships and Equality

Our behaviour approach is rooted in **relationships, consistency, fairness, restoration and high expectations**.

Equality does not require identical consequences for every pupil.

When deciding how to respond to behaviour, staff will consider relevant circumstances including:

- age;
- stage of development;
- SEND;



- SEMH needs;
- disability;
- communication difficulties;
- safeguarding concerns;
- individual circumstances;
- previous support and intervention;
- impact on others.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.

Where appropriate, restorative approaches will help pupils understand the impact of their behaviour, repair relationships and develop better strategies for the future.

SEND or vulnerability will never be used to excuse harmful behaviour. Equally, SEND or vulnerability will not be used as a reason for a disproportionate or discriminatory response.

Our aim is to ensure that behaviour systems are **fair, equitable, nurturing and ambitious**.

17. Attendance and Equality

Poor attendance can be both a cause and consequence of inequality.

The school will consider whether attendance difficulties are associated with:

- SEND;
- disability;
- SEMH needs;
- anxiety or emotional barriers;
- bullying;
- discrimination;
- safeguarding concerns;
- family circumstances;
- health needs;
- access difficulties.

We will seek to understand barriers and work collaboratively with pupils and families before determining the most appropriate support.

Attendance expectations remain high, but support will be proportionate and individualised.

18. Disadvantage

The school recognises that socioeconomic disadvantage can interact with other barriers.



We will monitor:

- attainment;
- progress;
- attendance;
- persistent absence;
- behaviour;
- participation;
- intervention access;
- wider outcomes.

Where differences are identified, we will investigate the reasons and provide appropriate support.

Our approach is not to make assumptions about disadvantaged pupils or families, but to identify and remove barriers.

19. EAL and Linguistic Diversity

Pupils for whom English is an additional language will be supported to access the curriculum.

We will:

- recognise existing language skills as an asset;
- explicitly develop vocabulary;
- use visual support;
- provide structured opportunities for talk;
- use translation or interpretation where appropriate;
- work with families;
- avoid confusing language acquisition with SEND.

20. Pastoral and SEMH Support

Our pastoral approach recognises the whole child.

We will support pupils to develop:

- confidence;
- self-esteem;
- emotional literacy;
- resilience;
- positive relationships;
- independence;
- respect;



- understanding of difference.

Appropriate support may involve:

- class teachers;
- SEND staff;
- Family Learning Mentor;
- Behaviour Mentor;
- specialist teachers;
- The Orchard;
- external agencies.

Our approach reflects evidence that social and emotional development and positive relationships are important components of effective support for vulnerable pupils.

21. Online Equality and Safety

Discriminatory behaviour can occur online as well as face-to-face.

The school will respond to online:

- racist behaviour;
- sexist behaviour;
- disability-related discrimination;
- homophobic or biphobic behaviour;
- religious prejudice;
- harassment;
- bullying;
- other discriminatory content.

Such incidents will be considered under the school's safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying and online safety procedures as appropriate.

22. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

Thornton Primary School will challenge discriminatory bullying and harassment.

This includes behaviour relating to:

- race;
- disability;
- SEND;
- sex;



- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- family circumstances;
- perceived difference.

All concerns will be taken seriously.

The school will support the child experiencing harm and, where appropriate, work with the child responsible for the behaviour to understand its impact and develop more appropriate behaviour.

23. Participation and Enrichment

All pupils should have meaningful opportunities to participate in:

- educational visits;
- sport;
- clubs;
- performances;
- leadership;
- school council;
- enrichment;
- community activities.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary.

Financial, physical, sensory, communication or other barriers will be considered when planning activities.

24. Equality Impact Assessment

Equality will be considered when developing and reviewing significant:

- policies;
- procedures;
- curriculum changes;
- behaviour systems;
- attendance strategies;
- staffing arrangements;
- SEND provision;
- school improvement priorities.

Leaders will consider whether decisions could disadvantage particular groups and what reasonable steps could be taken to prevent or reduce any adverse impact.



Equality considerations will therefore be part of **decision-making**, rather than simply a retrospective compliance exercise.

25. Pupil Voice

Pupils will be encouraged to contribute to decisions affecting them.

This may include:

- School Council;
- Eco Council;
- Sports Council;
- pupil surveys;
- SEND pupil voice;
- individual meetings;
- class discussions;
- pastoral conversations;
- feedback following interventions.

Pupils with communication difficulties will be supported to express their views using appropriate communication methods.

26. Parents, Carers and Families

We recognise parents and carers as important partners.

We will:

- communicate respectfully;
- seek to understand individual circumstances;
- provide accessible information where possible;
- encourage participation in school life;
- work collaboratively to support learning, attendance, behaviour and wellbeing;
- provide appropriate signposting and support.

We will not make assumptions about families based on socioeconomic circumstances, disability, race, religion, family structure or any other characteristic.

27. Staff Equality

Thornton Primary School is committed to a workplace free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.



Recruitment, induction, professional development, appraisal and promotion will be undertaken fairly and lawfully.

Staff will receive appropriate training to develop understanding of:

- equality;
- SEND;
- disability;
- inclusive teaching;
- safeguarding;
- discriminatory behaviour;
- reasonable adjustments;
- anti-discriminatory practice;
- nurturing and relational approaches.

Leaders will model **Love, Respect and Ambition** in their treatment of staff.

28. Anti-Racist and Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Thornton Primary School recognises that safeguarding and inclusion must be actively anti-discriminatory.

Staff will consider how prejudice, discrimination, racism and previous experiences may influence:

- a child's behaviour;
- a family's experience of school;
- communication;
- relationships;
- access to support;
- safeguarding concerns;
- professional decision-making.

We will challenge discriminatory assumptions and seek to ensure that decisions are based on evidence, individual circumstances and the child's best interests.

This reflects the strengthened anti-racist and anti-discriminatory emphasis in Working Together 2026.

29. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The governing body will:

- ensure compliance with equality duties;



- monitor the impact of this policy;
- challenge leaders appropriately;
- ensure equality is reflected in strategic planning.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- oversee implementation;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities;
- monitor equality information;
- ensure appropriate training;
- report to governors;
- ensure equality is reflected in school improvement planning.

Staff

All staff will:

- promote an inclusive ethos;
- maintain high expectations;
- make appropriate adjustments;
- challenge discrimination;
- respond appropriately to bullying and harassment;
- support pupils with SEND;
- use respectful language;
- report safeguarding concerns appropriately.

All Members of the School Community

Everyone has a responsibility to:

- demonstrate Love;
- show Respect;
- have Ambition for themselves and others;
- challenge discrimination;
- report concerns;
- celebrate difference.

30. Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will monitor equality through:



- attainment and progress;
- attendance and persistent absence;
- behaviour;
- suspensions;
- bullying;
- discriminatory incidents;
- safeguarding concerns;
- SEND outcomes;
- EHCP outcomes;
- access to intervention;
- participation in enrichment;
- pupil voice;
- parent/carers feedback.

Where differences are identified, leaders will investigate the reasons and take proportionate action.

The purpose of monitoring is not simply to identify differences but to **understand barriers and improve outcomes**.

31. Equality Objectives 2026–2027

Objective 1: Inclusive Achievement

Improve outcomes for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils through high-quality adaptive teaching, targeted intervention and specialist support.

Objective 2: Attendance

Reduce barriers to attendance, particularly for pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils experiencing SEMH difficulties.

Objective 3: Belonging

Ensure pupils with SEND, including pupils accessing The Orchard, experience a strong sense of belonging and have meaningful opportunities to participate in wider school life.

Ensure equality and protected characteristics are explicitly considered when identifying, assessing and responding to safeguarding concerns.

Objective 4: Inclusive Decision-Making

Ensure equality impact is considered when reviewing significant policies, practices and school improvement priorities.



These objectives will be monitored through the School Improvement Plan and reviewed annually.

32. Review and Publication

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or school provision.

The policy will be available on the school website and through the school office.

Its impact will be considered through school self-evaluation, the School Improvement Plan and governing body monitoring.

Signed: Mr David Ashcroft, Headteacher

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

To be agreed by the Staffing, Finance & Resources Committee on 03/11/2026