**The Laurel Trust: our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion commitment**

**‘***Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists: it is making a new space, a better space for everyone’[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Our Purpose**: The Laurel Trust champions practitioner partnership research into what works to widen opportunities and reduce disadvantage for all children and young people through securing improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and leadership.

**Our Values:**

* **Equality**
* **Respect**
* **Trust**

We value fairness, we act with respect and trust, and we will work, with all our partners, with integrity and compassion to support them to achieve the best outcomes for children

**Our Vision:**

The Laurel Trust is a charity with a successful track record of supporting schools serving disadvantaged communities to make sustainable differences to children’s learning and life-chances. We provide grant funding and work together with schools and other agencies to put evidence informed research into practice. Our approach is characterised by ethical leadership, moral integrity, and a commitment to raise hopes and horizons for vulnerable children and families.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:**

As a Board equality, equity, diversity and inclusion are important to us both in our own approach to governance and in our practice. We endorse Principle 6 of the Charity Governance Code: <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/6-diversity>. Proactively addressing equality, diversity and inclusion helps a board to make better decisions and stay relevant to the beneficiaries it supports. Recognising and countering any imbalances in power, perspectives and opportunities in our work and in the attitudes and behaviours of trustees and consultant(s) will help to make sure we achieve our aims and help deliver the Laurel Trust’s public benefit.

We want every child to experience school as a place where they are visible and valued, a place where they belong and do well, a place of possibility, support, friendship, and opportunity.

We believe ethical and equitable leadership:

* Is bold, visible, present, and vocal
* Addresses indifferences to equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion
* Always challenges racism, bias, and discrimination
* Models in behaviours and practices everyone’s entitlement to:
  + Acceptance and agency
  + Belief and belonging
  + Compassion, connection and contribution
* Speaks truth to power and challenges the status quo
* Asks authentically, and often, whether what we do is making a difference to the lived experiences of those we claim our work will benefit

**Defining equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion:**

Our starting points for defining the areas of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion are:

**Equality** is ensuring every individual has equal opportunities. It means being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice to ensure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. Achieving this requires a proactive approach to making reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

**Equity** recognises that every person has different experiences and circumstances and may need different resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome. We believe that equity is important to achieving just outcomes.

**Diversity** recognises and respects that weare alldifferent in many ways and actively embraces and values difference. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision making.

**Inclusion** means being proactive to ensure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment and valuing cognitive diversity but also about making sure that a culture exists where people can be the self they wish to be.

**Context:**

A key realisation for us at The Laurel Trust in our 2023 Strategic Review was that we need to:

* be more explicit in our commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion
* use our leadership position to be more vocal about the importance of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion
* take action to prioritise inclusion as a crucial aspect of our work

**The Challenge:**

Our society is full of inequalities and discrimination based on many factors not just the protected characteristics set out in law such as race, sex, disability and gender reassignment but other factors such as class, education and language. Much of this is so embedded that many of us scarcely notice it, whilst others of us are only too aware of the erosive and damaging daily reality of a society and systems built around a norm we do not fit. We carry our experiences, assumptions and habits into our working and volunteering lives and into our organisations. So, unless we choose to challenge and proactively address these issues, it is all too easy to perpetuate inequality and discrimination. To be excluding, not inclusive. The journey starts with self, us as individuals looking through an intersectional lens and enlarging our understanding of each other’s experiences and perspectives, but it does not end there.

Building an inclusive organisation requires conscious attention and effort, individually and collectively. And it’s multifaceted – it’s about intention, culture, systems, policies, processes, behaviours, strategy and resources and most importantly it’s about actions and impact.

All trustees have the same responsibility for the charity, so they must have equal opportunity to contribute to decision making. Board diversity, in the widest sense, is important because it creates more balanced decision making. Equality, equity and diversity are only effective and sustainable if the board works to be inclusive, ensuring that all trustees are welcomed, valued, safe and able to contribute.

Creating an inclusive organisation is long term and ongoing work.  As a Trustee Board, we commit ourselves to move forward, to listen and to learn, to take action jointly and individually, to effect change and to be held accountable for delivering change.

**Our planned outcomes in 2024 – 2026**

In our commitment to implement the equality, diversity and inclusion principle of the Charity Governance code:

* Ask each of our working groups:
  + Project Recruitment
  + Finance, Audit and Risk
  + Developing Links with other Organisations
  + Terms of Reference

to consider how they can ensure that our focus and processes are inclusive, diverse and fair

* Ensure new Trustee recruitment, retention and development contributes to diversifying our Board

September 2024

**Update September 2025**

* In the last year, the Laurel Trust recruited 5 new trustees, each of whom brings a wide range of new experiences, expertise and skills to the board and collectively have contributed to diversifying our board.

1. Professor George J. Sefa Dei, Canadian educator [↑](#footnote-ref-1)