



CELEBRATING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY 2023

Lionheart's CEO reflects on the Trust's journey to becoming an equitable organisation.

As we celebrate International Women’s Day, and the huge journey and impact our predecessors have fought for, it seems a good time to reflect on Lionheart Educational Trust’s journey, the steps we’ve taken, and the lessons we’ve learned in our quest to create a truly equitable organisation where every voice is heard and everybody can make a difference.

PROGRESSING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Only three years ago we launched our first Diversity Research Group, spurred on by the dream of creating a space where everyone knows they are equally valued and therefore would bring the best of themselves forward; thus, making a bigger difference to our young people and knowing that all children would be able to recognise a role model ‘just like them’.

Our journey towards this end goal has been difficult and challenging. At the outset we faced criticism and

were accused of being tokenistic, which was incredibly difficult to bear at the time. However, I now look back and recognise giving people a voice and hearing where they felt as though they’d been let down in the past (both in the workplace and wider society) was an essential part of winning trust and showing enough humility to get them back on the journey with us.

Since this point we’ve engaged with a number of strategies, each and every one focused on removing barriers to the workplace and career development. Our approaches have been based on talking with, and listening very carefully to, employee groups including LGBTQ+ (we hosted a pride festival in summer 2022 with over 2000 attendees), those dealing with the menopause, disability, BME and those who would identify as being working class. We have particularly focused on intersectionality and how this has impacted. We’ve backed up conversations through tracking workforce data including retention, promotion applications and employee satisfaction surveys.



WOMEN IN OUR WORKPLACE

We know female leaders make strong leaders who positively impact on employee morale and engagement, their leadership styles are often empathetic and so create a nurturing environment. They often have first-hand experience of balancing the demands of work and family life, which can translate into policies and approaches to promote work life balance for all.

We're proud that at Lionheart, 62% of our leadership roles are undertaken by women. That's 18 leaders within our schools and the central Trust that work alongside the 11 men in equal positions. Our data also shows that the gender pay gap between men and women in roles across our Trust has also reduced by 3.9% in the last academic year, although with significant impact made by salaries of women in the top quartile, we know there is work to do for a more even gender split in lower paid roles.

An increasing number of women in our Trust are in roles traditionally undertaken by men. For example, we employ two female school site managers and two female premises officers, whose roles can be physically demanding. Our digital development team that is heavily involved in computer programming has a 50/50 split of male and female employees, while our Director of Computing is also female.

As an employer, Lionheart truly looks for the possession of skills that are necessary when employing for roles, not at a person's gender.

OUTCOMES FROM OUR DRIVE FOR EDI

Since we have been pursuing our drive for EDI we have launched a much more generous, inclusive parental leave policy and have also run our first 'aspiring to senior leadership cohort', where 9 of 12 candidates were successful in securing their first senior leadership post, 8 of whom were from underrepresented groups.

Some of the strategies we've used which have been appreciated by our colleagues, and I would advocate, include:

- Raising the profile of EDI, investing time in listening groups and then showing you're taking on board employee suggestions – ensuring every voice is heard
- Rolling out unconscious bias training for senior leaders and those who play a role in recruitment

- Making a commitment that each interview panel will be diverse, at least, in terms of gender and ethnicity
- Consulting on and launching a menopause policy (often women who face menopause challenges alongside childcare and caring for elderly relatives can be driven from the workplace). Retaining the wealth of skill and knowledge of this group is essential
- Celebrating diversity. We launched a termly newsletter - with spotlights on staff from underrepresented groups - which have been popular and helped to maintain momentum. International and faith events are now firmly part of our celebrations calendar
- Using whole staff training sessions to focus on diversity and intersectionality, to raise the profile and help shout out how serious we are about making real change.

Where we are now is definitely not our final stop on our journey to inclusion, however, we are all absolutely committed to the vision and knowledge that diverse teams who represent society make the best teams. We recognise that a keen focus on equity and not equality will make the difference and our very many strong female leaders act as role models for the next generation of leaders, for those starting out on their career journeys and most importantly to our students.

Kath Kelly
CEO, Lionheart Educational Trust