

Equality Policy



**St. Mary's Primary School, a Catholic Voluntary
Academy**

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Introduction

St. Mary's is an inclusive school where we believe that all members of our community are of equal worth. We demonstrate our commitment to this by prioritising the well-being and progress of every child in our school and by striving to ensure that all members of our community are treated fairly in all situations.

We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups represented in the school. We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Equality Act 2010.

Our approach to equality is based on the following 7 key principles:

- All learners are of equal value. Whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.
- We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength. We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
- We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
- We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our schools' community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
- We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
- We have the highest expectations of all our children. We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential.
- We work to raise standards for all pupils, but especially for the most vulnerable. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole school.

Purpose of the Policy

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimization.

Our school ensures that it meets its Specific Equalities Duties in relation to the relevant legislation. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty we are required to publish information about equalities. The Equality Act 2010 clearly states that the following groups must be taken into account:

Groups with Protected Characteristics are:

- a. Disability

- b. Sex (gender)
- c. Race (ethnicity)
- d. Pregnancy and Maternity
- e. Religion and Belief
- f. Sexual Orientation
- g. Gender Reassignment

There are also 2 other protected characteristics but schools do not have a direct duty in respect of these:

- a. Age
- b. Marriage and Civil Partnership

The information we publish and analyse is clearly linked to the three aims (General Duties i.e. what the school aims to achieve) of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

These are:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Two Specific Duties:

This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

1. Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty by April 6th 2012
2. Publish Equality objectives at least every 4 years which are specific & measurable by April 6th 2012

This policy describes how the school is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

Appendix 1 is a checklist of key equality considerations. The school's equality objectives can be found in the Equality Information and Objectives document.

Links to Other Policies

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we will ensure that information about our responsibilities under the Equality Act are also included in our school development plans, self evaluation reviews, the school web site and newsletter. Our responsibilities under the Equality Act also inform policy and practice with regards to the school's behaviour, admissions, SEN and anti-bullying policies as well as minutes of meetings involving the Local Academy Committee, the whole staff, the senior leadership team and School Council. The Equality Act also applies to school in its role as employer, and we ensure that we comply with this in our recruitment procedures.

What we are Doing to Eliminate Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions, suspensions and exclusions, the way we provide education for our pupils and the way we provide access for pupils to facilities and services. We are aware of

the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled pupils, which is designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled pupils and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors ensure that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities. We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies and in the review of existing ones. We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day to day life of our schools. We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not unlawfully discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief. This includes sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Wherever these protected characteristics do apply either in regards to new pupils or their parents / carers, the school will not treat their applications for a place in the school less favourably.

Behaviour, Suspensions, Exclusions and Attendance

The school's policies on behaviour, suspensions and exclusions take full account of the new duties under the Equality Act. We make reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for pupils with a disability. We closely monitor data on exclusions and absence from school for evidence of over representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

Addressing Prejudice and Prejudice-Based Bullying

The school challenges all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality:

- a. prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- b. prejudices around race, religion or belief, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- c. prejudices around gender and sexual orientation, including homophobic attitudes

There is guidance for all staff on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with. We treat all bullying incidents equally seriously. We keep a record of different prejudice-related incidents and provide a report to the Local Academy Committee about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice related incidents at our schools and how we dealt with them. We review this data termly and take action to reduce incidents

What we are Doing to Advance Equality of Opportunity Between Different Groups

We know the needs of our pupils very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements. We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our pupil admissions procedures. We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of pupils and use this data to support school improvement. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. We collect and analyse data on the school population by gender and ethnicity, EAL, on the performance of pupils identified as having a special educational need and / or disability and by year group. We evaluate an analysis of standards reached by significant groups within the school at the end of Key Stage 2. In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between, for example, disabled and non-disabled people, people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and girls and boys. We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary. Our Local Academy Committee reviews its Accessibility Plan annually and makes reasonable adjustments to increase the extent to which pupils with disability can participate in the curriculum, to improve the physical environment and to improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils and other users of the school premises.

Positive Action

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of pupils with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the school's Equality Objectives. We prepare our pupils for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils. We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through RE, PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum. We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping. We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice-based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour. We provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures. We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people. We provide opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences. We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, whole school events e.g. Black History Month. We include equalities matters on our website and in our newsletter to parents and carers. Review relevant feedback from the parent questionnaires and consultations, parent-teacher meetings and other formal / informal feedback from parents and carers. Analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events. Review feedback and responses from the School Council, PSHE lessons, whole school surveys on pupils' attitudes. Analyse issues raised in Annual Reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans and Provision Maps, and issues raised with Learning Mentors and TA support. Gather feedback from Parent Governors and other members of the Local Academy Committee.

Publishing Equality Objectives

The objectives which we identify represent our school's priorities and are the outcome of a careful review of and analysis of data and other evidence. They also take into account national and local priorities and issues. We evaluate our success in meeting the Public Service Equality Duties by the extent to which we achieve improved outcomes for the different groups. We produce equality data analysis which informs our discussions about the equality objectives.

Monitoring and Reviewing Objectives

We review and update our equality objectives every two years and report annually to the local academy committee on progress towards achieving them. We involve and consult staff, pupils, governors and parents and carers.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. Where appropriate, we will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this. The Local Academy Committee is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. Every Local Academy Committee meeting keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Governors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's equalities work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys). The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination. The Headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the policy and for monitoring outcomes.

All teaching and support staff will:

- Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination
- Deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur

- Plan and deliver lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability
- Maintain the highest expectations of success for all pupils
- Support different groups of pupils in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult
- Keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

The school will provide training and guidance on equalities for all staff new to the school as part of the induction procedure. We will go through the principal expectations and duties of the Equality Act at a whole staff meeting at the start of the school year. Attendance at training will be recorded and all new and existing staff members will receive copies of the school's Equality Policy.

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will make available (on the school website) information about the school in advance of their visit to enable them to do this.

Equal Opportunities for Staff

The school is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment. All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability, and in compliance with the law. We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community. As employers we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. We ensure that all staff members, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development in line with the schools' improvement priorities and appraisal policy.

Appendix 1: Check List for School Staff and Governors

- 1. The school collects information on race, disability and gender with regards to both pupils and staff, e.g. pupil achievement, attendance, exclusions and staff training.
- 2. This information is used to inform the policies, plans and strategies, lessons, additional support, training and activities the school provides.
- 3. The Equality Policy, Plan and Objectives have been shaped by the views, input and involvement of staff, parents, governors, pupils and other stakeholders.
- 4. The school publishes information to demonstrate purposeful action on the general duties.
- 5. The school analyses pupil achievement in terms of progress and standards for different groups and takes action when there trends or patterns indicate a need.
- 6. The school sets Equality Objectives to improve outcomes for vulnerable pupils and monitors progress on reaching these objectives.
- 7. The Headteacher has responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of the policy and monitoring outcomes.
- 8. The school ensures that all staff understand and implement the key requirements of the Equality Policy.
- 9. The school ensures that visitors to the school understand and follow the key requirements of the Equality Policy.
- 10. The curriculum includes opportunities for all pupils to understand and celebrate diversity and difference.
- 11. All groups of pupils are encouraged to participate in school life and make a positive contribution.
- 12. The school monitors bullying and harassment of pupils in terms of difference and diversity (i.e. different groups) and takes action if there is a cause for concern.
- 13. Visual displays and multi-media resources reflect the diversity of the school community.
- 14. Minority ethnic, disabled and both male and female role models and those of vulnerable groups are promoted positively in lessons, displays, discussions and class assemblies.
- 15. The school takes part in annual events such as Black History Month, Anti Bullying Week, Refugee Week, Interfaith Fortnight etc. to raise awareness of issues around race, disability and gender.

- 16. The school environment is increasingly accessible to pupils, staff and visitors to the school with disabilities.

- 17. Open evenings and other events which parents, carers and the community attend are held in an accessible part of the school and issues such as language barriers are considered.

- 18. The accessibility needs of parents, pupils and staff are considered in the publishing and sending out of information.

- 19. The Governing Body is increasingly representative of the community it serves.

- 20. Procedures for the election of parent governors are open to candidates and voters who are disabled.