

Introduction

“Every Catholic school will strive to be a Christian Community, committed to Christian values – a place where the Gospel comes to life and students are enabled to influence positively the rest of society for the building of the Kingdom” (Catholic Schools, Children of other faiths and Community Cohesion 2008, p6)

Our Lady & St John Catholic College is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth.

“In a Catholic school, the task must be to promote human growth in such a way that they (pupils of other faiths) can integrate their particular faith within every aspect of their lives” (sic p7)

We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to the principles of 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.

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

1. All members of our school community are of equal value.
2. 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 equality. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
3. We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
4. We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school 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.
5. 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.
6. We have the highest expectations of all our children. We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential.
7. 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 victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against pupils or treat them less favourably because of their

sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy or maternity.

Age and marriage and civil partnership are “protected characteristics” for adults in school.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably on the basis of the following protected characteristics:

- Sex;
- Race;
- Disability;
- Religion or belief;
- Sexual orientation;
- Gender reassignment- this protection was introduced by the Act;
- Pregnancy or maternity – the Act extended this protection to pupils.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and two specific duties

- The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty”
- This requires all public organisations, including schools to
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups

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.

Development of the Policy

When developing the policy we took account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010 and also the Ofsted inspection framework 2012, which places a strong focus on improving the learning and progress of different groups and on closing gaps in standards.

We note that OFSTED has a statutory duty to report on the outcomes and provision for pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

Links to other Policies and Documentation

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we ensure that information about our responsibilities under the Equality Act are also included in our school development plan, self-evaluation review, the school prospectus, school web site and newsletters.

There are also references in the behaviour, admissions, SEND and anti-bullying policies as well as minutes of meetings involving governors, the whole staff, and the senior leadership team and school council.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the way we comply with this are found in our recruitment policy.

What we are doing to Eliminate Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation.

Unlawful behaviour

- Direct discrimination – occurs when one person treats another less favourably because of a protected characteristic, than they treat, or would treat, other people;
 - Indirect discrimination – occurs where a “provision, criteria or practice” is applied which has the effect of putting people who have a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic;
 - Harassment – “unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. In schools this applies only to harassment because of sex, race, disability and pregnancy and maternity. It does not apply to religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. This does not of course mean that such behaviour would be permissible; it would remain unlawful discrimination notwithstanding that this legal definition does not apply;
 - Victimisation – is where a person is treated less favourably because of something done (“a protected act”) in connection with the Act e.g. because the person has brought a claim under the Act
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- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions 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 – 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 ensures 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 today life of the school.
- 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 discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

The school Policy on Behaviour - Rewards, Sanctions and Exclusions - takes 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 guidance makes clear that, like all schools, schools with a religious character have a responsibility to the welfare of children in their care and to adhere to curriculum guidance. It goes on to say that, provided their beliefs are explained in an appropriate way in an educational context that takes into account existing guidance on the delivery of Sex and Relationship education (SRE) and Religious Education, then schools should not be acting unlawfully. Further that it would not be unlawful for a teacher in any school to express personal views on sexual orientation provided that it is done in an appropriate manner and context. The guidance however provides a note of caution about the influential role of a teacher and that their actions and responsibilities extend beyond the requirements of the equality legislation and that expressing personal views should not extend to allowing unlawful discrimination.

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

- Prejudices around disability and special educational needs - prejudices around race, religion or belief. Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum - prejudices around gender and sexual orientation.

Staff are provided with guidance 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 governors about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school 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 school population very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements.

- We work in partnership with parents and carers, primary schools and other agencies, to identify children who have a disability and make appropriate transition arrangements.
- 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 number skills.
- We collect, analyse and publish data:
 - on the school population by gender and ethnicity;
 - on the % of pupils identified as having a special educational need and/or disability and by their principal need or disability;
 - by year group – in terms of ethnicity, gender and proficiency in English;
 - on inequalities of outcome and participation, related to ethnicity, gender and disability and proficiency in English
 - We analyse and internally publish standards reached by different British, ethnic FSM (Free School Meals), SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), Looked After and previously Looked-After children, Traveller and EAL (English as an additional Language) groups
 - We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions - of different groups
 - We are aware that the legislation relates mainly to current but also to future - pupils – we will for example, be sufficiently prepared if a Visually Impaired, - Hearing impaired or Gypsy Roma Traveller pupil joins our school.
 - We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any pupils’ - achievement or that seeks to define their potential as learners, such as” less - able”.
 - We use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all - pupils.
 - We provide support to pupils at risk of underachieving.
 - We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative - language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.
 - 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
 - girls and boys

- We ensure equality of access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.

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.

What we are doing to foster good relations

- We prepare our pupils for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes 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 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.
- We provide prayer rooms
- We provide additional care at times of fasting
- We provide halal meat in our dining rooms
- We have amended our school policy on uniform to reflect inclusion of all cultures
- We provide appropriate access to disabled staff and pupils

Other ways we address equality issues

Our admissions criteria reflects our Catholic faith

- The posts of Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Head or Co-ordinator of Religious Education the post must be filled by a baptised and practising Catholic.
- We maintain records of all training relating to Equalities.
- Our monitoring records include evaluations of aspects of Equalities.
- We keep minutes of meetings where equality issues are discussed.
- We have a rolling programme for reviewing all of our school policies in relation to equalities and their impact on the progress, safety and well-being of our pupils.
- The implications for equalities of new policies and practices are considered before they are introduced.
- In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:
 - Review relevant feedback from the annual parent questionnaire, parents' evening, parent-school forum and/or focus meetings or governors' parent-consultation meeting.
 - Secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events.
 - Review feedback and responses from the children and groups of children, from the school council, PSHE lessons, whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school (PASS).
 - Analyse issues raised in Annual Reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans/Personalised Provision Maps, mentoring and support.
 - Ensure that we secure responses and feedback at Governing Body meetings.

Publishing Equality Objectives (see SEF and School Development Plan)

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 include Equality data analysis and attainment objectives across all year groups in the school SEF and whole school development plan

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. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

Governing body

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures are implemented.

Every governing body committee 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 specific sections of the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's progress taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys)

Headteacher and Leadership team

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.

A senior member of staff has day-to-day responsibility for co-coordinating implementation of the policy and for monitoring outcomes. S/he will have expert and informed knowledge of the Equality Act.

Teaching and Support Staff

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.

We will provide training and guidance on Equalities for all staff new to the school as part of the induction procedure.

Visitors

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.

Equal Opportunities for staff.

This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff. We are 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 will ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

As an employer 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, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy

We review the information about equalities in the policy annually and make adjustments as appropriate.

Disseminating the Policy

This Equality Policy along with the Equality Objectives and data is available:

- on the school website
- as paper copies in the school office
- in the staff handbook
- as part of induction for new staff

We ensure that the whole school community knows about the policy, objectives and data through the school newsletter, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications.

We publish on the school's website copies of relevant policies and guidance, including those on behaviour, anti-bullying and special educational needs.

Equality Objectives:

Our school priorities change to address current issues. They will always reflect the ethos of this statement