

Equal Opportunities Policy

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Aims

- To achieve the highest standards of teaching and learning for all irrespective of ethnicity, religious belief, age, gender, ability and disability or social background
- To encourage respect for and understanding of the beliefs, doctrines and personal circumstances of individuals
- To involve, as far as possible, representatives from diverse groups, within our catchment, in school life
- To consider when defining school policy and procedure the implications for different groups within our catchment
- To work with other schools in order to share strengths and seek ideas for improvement
- To seek to promote the welfare in school of individuals who have specific physical, emotional, learning and religious needs
- To deal swiftly, effectively and firmly with comments and incidents which are detrimental to the well being of others
- To deploy EMA (Ethnic Minority Achievement) staff efficiently in order to address the needs of EAL students
- To seek to employ a range of staff representing the diversity of our catchment and variety of experience
- To ensure the correct and appropriate procedures are used for the recruitment of staff

Rationale

At our school we benefit from the diversity of experience that our children bring. We welcome differences and celebrate culture, respecting the needs of the individual, the group and the school community as a whole. We seek to share the different cultures represented here to inform and enrich.

On occasions we may also visit other schools with a less diverse catchment in order to spread our knowledge and understanding. In addition we invite visitors into our school to describe their own faiths, beliefs and ways of life.

The children in our school are taught to respect such visitors and approach these opportunities with a real spirit of enquiry. We encourage a sense of pride and aim to help children feel confident in discussing their own experiences and sharing their beliefs.

We recognise the importance of enabling all our children and their families equal access, as far as possible, to the facilities and activities we have to offer. High standards are possible for all and we seek to ensure that our expectations are challenging whatever the level of intellectual or physical ability, gender, race or religion. We try to extend this welcome to all our catchment including staff, parents/ guardians, children and the community.

Some of our children and families may have unequal starting points and may need special attention and provision in order to work with others on a more equal basis. We seek to provide these opportunities and raise awareness within the community of the needs they have.

It is important that we encourage the active involvement of our learners and help them to understand their rights as well as respecting the rights of others. We actively engage with our community to ensure that prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are challenged providing a harmonious working environment in which everyone feels valued.

Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Personal, Health, Social and Citizenship Education Policy
- The Behaviour Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Accessibility Plans
- SEN policy
- Staff recruitment policy

Definitions

We understand equal opportunities to describe an environment in which no child or adult is prevented from taking a full part in the life of the school as a result of:

- Age
- Gender
- Physical needs
- Behavioural needs
- Learning needs
- Ethnic background
- Religious background

This will influence our approach to:

- Constructing and delivering the curriculum
- School ethos
- Involving parents and the local community
- Sharing our experiences
- School procedures
- Admissions
- Employment
- Access to facilities
- English as an Additional Language
- Staff Well-being

Setting standards for all

All students are expected to work towards their potential – at whatever level that may be. Classroom organisation and planning must have regard to every pupil's individual needs. In order to ensure this is the case, we aim to include reference to equal opportunities through:

- curriculum and administrative policies
- budget planning
- the single integrated development plan

In terms of academic success, we are committed to supporting the learning of children across the ability range and as such are conscious of the fair distribution of resources not only at points crucial to performance table statistics.

Different students will excel in different subjects. As such, we continue to protect the broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that all children have chance to succeed and have their skills and abilities recognised.

Our assessment policy sets the standard in terms of ensuring that we have a good understanding of what our children have learnt and how we can support them in the next stage of their learning.

We emphasise the importance of involving children in self-assessment and enabling a genuine culture of consultation and involvement.

We identify trends within year groups and track the progress of individuals, increasingly use data to check that all groups within the school are achieving their potential. SATs analysis of the core subjects is a particularly useful method of highlighting any areas for development. Assessments are analysed to identify any emerging issues in relation to the performance of girls/ boys, children with special needs, travellers and children according to ethnic origin.

Individual assessment of EAL children is completed annually by our EMA teachers. The information from this assessment is compiled and used to demonstrate trends and individual progression. Discussion with classteachers is an important feature as are 'focus' opportunities where time is taken to assess the needs of individuals. Provision for children with English as an additional language is separate from that provided for pupils with SEN.

Curriculum planning

All pupils have access to the full range of the curriculum. Children are encouraged to gain confidence in non-stereotyping curriculum areas and mixed gender groups are part of the school's normal working practice.

Planning takes account of the need for differentiation to provide full access for pupils with a range of varying needs. Core subject leaders and the SENCO check planning to ensure that provision and resources are appropriate.

Classroom management

Each classroom is made equally welcoming to boys and girls with flexible seating arrangements and a variety of resources made accessible to support children in their learning.

Grouping is appropriate for specific purposes and positive discrimination is adopted in order to meet every child's rights under equal opportunities. A positive classroom ethos is developed with the use of rewards and boundaries and clear expectations for classroom behaviour.

All children feel valued, have individual targets and are clear about what they need to do next to make the progress expected of them.

Resources

Resources are prepared and selected which are free from gender or cultural bias where possible. Regular audits of resources help ensure appropriateness and relevance. Where bias is identified attention will be drawn to this and may be used as a teaching point to provoke discussion.

Developing our ethos

School ethos is set by the quality of relationships within a school and the sense of vision that the school has as a whole. Our aim statement is:

Success, Happiness and Excellence in a Safe, Caring Environment

All adults and children within the school contribute to our ethos. The key factors are:

- The examples they set through relationships and actions
- The organisation of the school and the extent to which it values involvement, co-operation and consultation
- Curriculum development and improvement with a priority placed upon maintaining the broad and balanced curriculum
- School projects and groups which emphasise the importance of social skills and the development of self-esteem e.g. circle time, nurture group, schools' council
- A positive behaviour policy where every opportunity is taken to praise and reward and encourage a sense of community and shared responsibility
- The scene set during assemblies and other collective opportunities including the use of houses and phase identity
- Discussion of issues with children as part of the PHSE and citizenship curriculum
- Taking every opportunity to celebrate our successes and strengths as a school
- That school and classroom ethos reflect the value placed on every individual child
- School publications reflect our commitment to equal opportunities
- That we have a communication friendly environment

Collective worship

All pupils have the opportunity to participate in collective worship. Collective worship is planned according to the themes of the SEAL programme and links in with opportunities for PHSE and C. Pupils are encouraged to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs.

Involving parents and the local community

We seek to involve as many parents and members of the local community in our school as possible. We encourage active involvement through:

- Written communications such as newsletters, termly plans for parents and guides to the curriculum
- Annual helpers' meetings
- Parents' and open evenings
- Drop-in sessions
- Parent consultation mornings
- Fund-raising and social events
- Attendance at assemblies
- Attendance at and participation in concerts and other school events

Where groups of parents seem less well-represented in school we try to set up activities and events that will encourage them to participate. Our learning mentor is actively involved in building bridges between school and 'hard-to-reach' parents.

Some of our teaching staff are bi-lingual and are happy to translate into community languages where necessary. Bi-lingual members of staff are available at key times such as parents' evenings to help them access and share information.

Where parents are willing to help organise clubs and groups, the school aims to provide facilities and support. We encourage letting of our school buildings and playing fields. We now host a holiday summer scheme in order to open up activities to all children during the six week break. We are committed to the principles of the extended school.

Sharing our experiences

Our school is fortunate to have a richness of culture and a diversity of ethnic origin, which enables children to learn first hand what it means to have different religious beliefs. Opportunities are taken within school to share these experiences through:

- Assemblies where children explain about their faith
- RE lessons where children are encouraged to share their experiences
- Discussions during circle time where any misconceptions can be addressed
- Celebration of religious festivals in assemblies
- Displays around the school which reflect a range of positive images

We also aim to share our experiences with other schools. We do this through:

- Hosting and sharing INSET where possible
- Being part of learning networks which encourage cooperation and support
- Enabling groups of our children to visit other schools
- Taking part in the inter-cultural festival
- Inviting and encouraging participation from local secondary schools in our 'focus' weeks

Circle time provides a good opportunity for children to discuss issues relating to equal opportunities in a sympathetic environment. Other opportunities to share experiences within the community include:

- Taking children to the local hospice
- Inviting speakers into school from different faiths and charities
- Arranging trips within the locality e.g. local farm, arts centre, museum, park

Awareness of some of the difficulties relating to stereotyping and discrimination is important. Opportunities should be taken to discuss these through the curriculum as well as on a pastoral basis as the need arises.

Discrimination and omissions noted in books and other resources should be tackled and discussed openly.

School procedures – considerations

A variety of home-life circumstances has an effect upon children's experiences in school. We aim to take into account the differences that exist and that may place extra pressure upon particular children at particular times. Special factors that need consideration include:

- The effect of excessive homework when children have commitments after school for religious observance
- Attitudes towards fund-raising and how this might affect attendance at various events
- Any implications for the curriculum in terms of the faiths present in our school e.g. swimming, changing for PE/ games, Sex Education
- Ways in which the school year might be affected by religious festivals
- Requests for money for trips, charity and other extras which parents might find difficult with inconsiderate timing
- The need for special food to be made available for religious reasons
- The need to balance the presence of withdrawal groups with whole class teaching requirements

We try to address these considerations through:

- Providing parents with early notice of trips and additional activities
- Providing as many lunchtime clubs as possible
- Timing after-school events so as not to coincide with family commitments
- Consulting the religious communities about the Sex Education policy
- Being aware of the implications of religious festivals in terms of attendance
- Providing opportunity for children to fully participate in times of religious observance
- Ensuring that school catering provides for different religious requirements
- Careful timing of withdrawal groups and monitoring of the number and effect in order to minimise disruption whilst also enabling individuals to access the support they need
- A high profile on differentiation in planning, delivery and resources
- Appropriate training of staff to ensure understanding of the special requirements of the school community
- Completion of risk assessments where there are concerns about children with particular behavioural or learning needs
- Access management plans to help us ensure that the school provides physical access for all

Meeting the needs of groups and individuals

There are times during the school year when specific provision will be made for children on the basis of their gender, religious beliefs, family background and abilities. These include:

- Provision of a prayer room during Ramadan
- Single-sex health and sex education lessons
- Intervention programmes to support children with particular needs
- Ensuring that the arts, sports and social skills have a high profile within our curriculum to enable less academic children to develop a sense of self-esteem
- Promoting an ethos of inclusion where adaptations are made and flexibility of provision is encouraged around the individual needs of the child
- Adopting a multi-agency approach which seeks to support the work of other professionals whilst also taking advice and keeping informed
- Providing and supporting parents who have difficulties with their own literacy and numeracy

Admissions

As a community school our Local Authority (LA) is the admission authority. Our governing body acts in accordance with the admission arrangements determined and published by our LA.

Employment

The staff recruitment policy reflects the principles of equal opportunity and is reviewed annually by the governing body. When vacancies occur we:

- advertise the position sufficiently widely to allow a reasonable number of applicants
- ensure candidates are made aware of the school's selection procedure, criteria and candidate specification
- shortlist according to agreed criteria
- interview, applying the same principles to each candidate
- provide feedback to all candidates and explain decisions made as quickly as possible

Every attempt will be made to enable candidates to demonstrate their abilities and interviewees will keep an open mind with regard to ethnicity, gender class and disability. It will not always be assumed that a higher level of qualification makes a candidate more appropriate for the post.

Experience and maturity will be recognised for their value alongside enthusiasm and a willingness to learn. Appointments will be made on the basis of merit and suitability for the post. Financial considerations will, wherever possible, be kept to a minimum.

Once in post, an induction programme supports staff during the initial stages of employment and opportunities for staff development are made available to all members of staff on an annual basis. The appraisal process reflects the principles of equal opportunities.

Access to facilities

The school's access plans are reviewed and updated annually. These provide a short, medium and long-term view in order to make the school more accessible and able to provide for the variety of physical and sensory disabilities which current and future pupils may have.

Staff Well-being

We pride ourselves on acknowledging the needs of staff not only in terms of their role as educators within school but also as parents, children and individuals. As such we will try to accommodate staff requests involving family demands where appropriate and not to the detriment of the children in school. Guidance on absence is available separately.

We try to enable staff to juggle effectively their home and school responsibilities, maintaining the drive for school improvement whilst limiting the number and duration of meetings. We aim to support staff in maintaining a healthy work/ life balance and recognise the value of staff having the time they need for leisure activities and pursuing other interests. Additional school events are planned well in advance and consultation takes place on time and date.

When it goes wrong – dealing with issues

We take pride in the way in which our children work together irrespective of differences of religion, ability and social background. However, on occasions, racism, sexism and bullying do occur. We acknowledge its presence and are committed to actively campaigning against it. We aim to tackle it by:

- Maintaining an overall school ethos of respect and tolerance for one another
- Insisting upon high expectations in relation to children's conduct towards one another
- Providing a range of opportunities for children to work together
- Setting a good example ourselves with positive rolemodels
- Recording and addressing all incidents that are reported – incidents of racism being separately recorded along with any actions taken
- Providing feedback on trends in incidents to the governing body
- Taking advice from members of the local community and/ or the LA where there are worrying trends or pressures
- Applying our behaviour policy and appropriate sanctions where rules are broken
- Working in conjunction with parents to discuss unhelpful attitudes and difficulties with social skills

Responsibilities

It is expected that all staff, pupils and adults will pay due regard to the feelings of others and their needs and will implement this policy to the best of their ability. A spirit of fairness and openness will be encouraged and negative stereotyping prohibited.

The Board will:

- Ensure that there is an equal opportunities policy in place and review its content and efficacy on an annual basis
- Assess the impact of the policy on the standards attained by different groups within the school
- Make reasonable adjustments if the premises or employment arrangements limit access to particular community groups or individuals on the basis of disability or gender
- Plan to increase over time the accessibility of school to disabled pupils
- Receive feedback as part of the Headteacher's report and question school practice
- Give due regard to its own members and recruitment of new governors

Senior management will:

- ensure the place of equal opportunities within the single integrated development plan
- ensure that the 'equal opportunities policy' is kept up-to-date report to the Board on a regular basis
- record and deal with incidents of racism, bullying and other cases of inappropriate behaviour
- co-ordinate the curriculum in conjunction with subject leaders to ensure equality of opportunity is represented in the core and foundation subjects
- ensure that equal opportunities is covered within all subject policies and plans
- provide opportunity for resources to be ordered to support this policy
- apply equal opportunities legislation and guidance in the school's appointment process and general procedures
- monitor performance by groups of children in their subject either through analysis or discussion with other senior staff
- ensure the application of the admissions policy
- continue to monitor and formulate accessibility plans in conjunction with the governing body

Class teachers will:

- ensure the implementation of this policy within the classroom and in their own dealings with staff, children and the school community
- contribute to discussions about equal opportunity issues
- monitor their own procedures and routines to ensure that children are treated equitably
- refer incidents and concerns, where appropriate, to the headteacher

All school staff will:

- set an example to children in terms of their treatment of one another and display of tolerance and understanding towards the beliefs and cultures of others
- ensure that policies and procedures are implemented according to the equal opportunities policy
- be vigilant for incidents of racism, sexism and prejudice and act upon them
- encourage children to try new activities challenging stereotypical roles and prejudice

Monitoring and Evaluation

Key indicators of the efficacy of this policy include:

- The balance and profile of staff employed
- The number of racist incidents recorded
- The number of referrals of bullying
- The behaviour and attitude of children to a range of adults around the school building e.g. showing courtesy to all adults
- The readiness of children to mix with one another in the playground and take part in team games
- The readiness of children to work in groups with one another in class
- The language the children use towards one another
- The range of displays demonstrating the variety of cultures present in the school
- The number and range of adults participating in school and social events.