

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

Equality Policy

Introduction

St Mary Magdalen's is committed to the advantage of equality of opportunities for all members of the school community. The governing body aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, parent or pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably than anyone else.

This policy is concerned with all pupils' access to the curriculum and the recruitment and opportunity of all staff.

The Equality Act 2010, the bulk of which took effect from 1st October 2012, replaces and consolidates previous anti-discrimination legislation, including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976, with a single Act. The 2010 Act introduces changes that the school needs to take account of.

The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), sometimes referred to as the general duty that applies to schools and all public bodies. The combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. In common with all public bodies, St. Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Foster good relations across all characteristics, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In practise, due regard means that the governing body and the leadership team will:

- Be aware of the duty to have due regard when making decisions or taking action and will assess whether it may have implications for people with particular protected characteristics
- Consider equality implications before and at the time that they develop policy and take decisions, not as an afterthought and they will keep them under review on a continuing basis
- Integrate PSED into the implementation of all the schools functions and ensure that the analysis necessary to comply with the duty is carried out seriously, rigorously and with an open mind. It will never be a question of ticking boxes or just following a particular process

It is unlawful to discriminate in the following areas, termed protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Aims and objectives

- To comply with the legislation of the Equality Act 2012
- To continue to maintain the school's position as a provider of the highest quality education and, as a good employer, providing development opportunities for all staff
- To ensure that equality remains high on the school's strategic agenda
- To establish good management practice and to set out a proactive agenda in which discrimination is recognised as an organisational issue which needs an organisational response
- To ensure that all staff work together with a shared sense of purpose to meet the needs of every pupil
- To ensure that pupils and staff contribute towards a happy and caring environment by showing respect for and appreciation of, one another as individuals
- To ensure that complaints or evidence of failure to comply with the school's equality policy will be dealt with promptly and fully investigated according to the relevant procedure.

As a VA school, St. Mary Magdalen's has certain exceptions to the general code as applied to most schools in England and Wales. These are:

- The Admissions Code permits the school to give priority to practising Catholics providing that the school continues to be oversubscribed.
- When organising visits, the school is not acting unlawfully if it does not organise similar visits for children of other faiths
- The Equality Act does not permit us to offer less favourable treatment to a pupil who no longer belongs to the Catholic Church. This is also true if the pupils parents no longer belong to the church
- It is also unlawful for us to refuse to accept a pupil if, for example, the parents are gay

We may apply religious criteria when recruiting or dismissing any member of the teaching staff. In recruitment, remuneration and promotion, although we seek to appoint the person most suitable for the post, we may give preference to persons:

- Whose religious opinions are in accordance with the Catholic faith
- Who attends religious worship
- Who give, or are willing to give religious education

In considering dismissals, the governing body may have regard to any conduct that is incompatible with the precepts.

Curriculum

We seek to provide a broad and balanced curriculum in which the basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught progressively and systematically.

Furthermore, the school's aim is to provide for all pupils according to their needs, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnic origin. The curriculum avoids stereotypes and provides good role models for all pupils. The content for the curriculum has never been within discrimination law and the new Act explicitly excludes it. However, the delivery of the curriculum is explicitly included.

Therefore we seek to ensure that the curriculum is not delivered in a discriminatory way. For example:

- Children from all ethnic backgrounds are called upon to express their views in class discussions
- Girls and boys have equal access to all areas of the curriculum including sport

When curriculum policies are reviewed due regard is given to equal opportunity implications.

Tracking pupil progress

We aim to ensure that all barriers to learning are removed for all our pupils, especially those with protected characteristics. To achieve this we:

- Track the progress of pupils by analysing data by race, gender and disability
- Track the progress of all our pupils by analysing data
- Carry out termly assessments of all our pupils in mathematics, reading, comprehension, writing, science and I.C.T.
- Set up targets for English and mathematics
- Draw up Provision Mapping grids for each class at the beginning of each term and review these regularly

Special issues for some protected characteristics

Gender reassignment

It is rare for very young pupils to want to undergo gender reassignment. However, the governors will ensure that gender variant pupils, or the children of transgender parents are not singled out for different or less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

Race

The governors will make sure that pupils of all races are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. An annual audit is carried out to monitor the learning experience of these pupils.

Sexual orientation

The governors will make sure that all gay, lesbian or bi-sexual pupils or the children of gay, lesbian or bi-sexual parents are not singled out for unfair treatment.

Disability

The governors will make all reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantage to a disabled pupil. When considering what a reasonable adjustment is, the governors will take into account the circumstances of each case. Factors which the governors will consider include: the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements and whether aids have been made available through the Special Educational Needs route.

Positive Action

Under the Act, the school can now lawfully make New Positive Action provisions to allow us to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. These measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim. The school will use these provisions as appropriately as possible.

Specific duties

In order that the school fulfils its obligations under the Act it will update the published policy and information annually and publish equality objectives at least once every four years. The objectives will be measurable and focus on real improvements and positive outcomes.

Equality Objective for the school year 2012-2012

To ensure that the attendance rates for pupils with protected characteristics are at 96% and the level to be measured and reported to governors at regular intervals throughout the year.

Recruitment and employment of staff

The governing body will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirement for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

The governing body will consider any possible indirect discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practice and will refuse such requests only if the governing body considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristics, for doing so.

The governing body will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations and will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

The school will monitor the ethnic, gender, and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for the jobs (including promotion) and the number of people with disabilities within these groups and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The governing body will ensure that appropriate training is provided on equal opportunities to all staff likely to be involved in recruitment.

All staff will assist the governing body and the whole school to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.

All staff should be aware that they can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the governing body for any act of unlawful discrimination.

If any member of staff considers that they have experienced unlawful discrimination, they may use the school's grievance procedure to make a complaint. The governing body will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds.

You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless the complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Implementation and review

The role of the governing body is:

- To ensure that this policy is implemented and that it is reviewed every year
- To promote a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the school's ethos and values
- To ensure that exit interviews are carried out with pupils (Fairness and the experience of school) and staff to provide helpful information and feedback on the effectiveness of the policy. (See Appendices A & B).

The role of the headteacher is:

- To implement this policy with support from the governing body
- To ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and that all staff apply it in all situations
- To ensure that all appointment panels apply the procedures and principles in this policy, so that everyone is treated equally and fairly
- To ensure that all members of the school community, especially those with protected characteristics, play a full part in all aspects of school life
- To ensure that all complaints about unlawful discrimination are investigated and resolved appropriately

The role of the staff is:

- To always act and behave in a way that is consistent with the aims and objectives of the policy
- To regularly review policies to take account of equal opportunities implications

All members of the school community are responsible for promoting the school's equality policy and are obliged to respect and act in accordance with the policy.