



POLICY FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

St. Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas Primary School has a long-standing commitment to equality of opportunity. This commitment is confirmed in a number of pre-existing policies including; the Special Needs Policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Management of Behaviour Policy.

Where equality of opportunity exists, all staff and learners work in a more rewarding and less stressful environment, one free from prejudice and harassment and one more likely to enhance their performance and achievement.

The purpose of the Policy and Guidelines is to:

- Support the Catholic ethos of the school and create a climate for school improvement, enabling all pupils and staff to give of their best;
- Enable the School Governing Body to respond to legislation and best practice guidance in the field of equality and opportunity;
- Ensure that the School Governing Body's Policy supports the School's Mission Statement; and
- Provide a clear framework for action in relation to equality of opportunity over the coming years.

Aims and Intentions of the Policy

The Governing Body of St Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas School has a vision of education, a Mission Statement and a commitment to Equal Opportunities.

The Mission Statement says:

'St.Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas School is an environment where each member of the school community is able to reach his/her potential.'

The Commitment to Equal Opportunities is stated in the following Policy:



POLICY STATEMENT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

'All human beings are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image...there is here a basic equality between all people and it must be given ever greater recognition... forms of social or cultural discrimination... on the grounds of sex, race colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed as incompatible with God's design.'

Gaudium et Spes 29.

The Governing Body of St. Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas School is committed to ensuring that all aspects of school life, including admissions, curriculum, and staffing are dealt with in a fair and just manner. Governors believe that the principle of equal opportunity in all things is consistent with social justice and best educational and personnel practice; it is in keeping with our Catholic aim to recognise the dignity and worth of all people. To this end we aim to comply with both the letter and the spirit of the Law.

Admissions

In common with other Catholic schools in England, St. Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas School was founded to serve the local community, predominantly by providing education for the children of Catholic Families. The school thus has a duty to give preference in admissions to Catholic children. The Governing Body follows its admissions arrangements carefully and does not discriminate in terms of race, sex, colour or disability.

Curriculum

All pupils are entitled to equal access to the full curriculum, recognising the importance of differentiating that curriculum in order to meet children's individual needs. The school staff and governors strive to be constantly aware that their own expectations can affect children's achievement, behaviour and status.

Personnel

The Governing Body's selection processes aim to select the best applicants assessed against professional criteria for the post. The school acknowledges its commitment to conducting our affairs in accordance with equal opportunities legislation. When drawing-up or applying selection criteria, the governors do not discriminate on grounds of age, sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin or disability.

The Roman Catholic community maintains schools which have, as part of their character, a duty to provide Religious Education and a requirement that those schools be conducted in accordance with the rites, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic faith. It would therefore be clear that where applicants are equal in qualifications and experience in the context of selection criteria for a teaching post, that a Roman Catholic applicant would have an advantage over applicants not of Roman Catholic faith in being able to contribute to the mission of the Church in Catholic education. The posts of Headteacher, Deputy Head, Religious Education Co-ordinator and certain other senior posts are reserved for practising Catholics.



In fulfilling the objectives of Catholic schools, governors must have regard to matters which are particularly significant in the light of the sacramental teachings of the Church. Catholic teachers by their example and practice are witnesses to the Gospels and to the Church's teachings. The Governing Body would therefore, in line with its responsibilities, reserve the right to take account of circumstances which were genuinely within a person's control and which might include marital status, avowed personal conviction, belief or conduct."

Monitoring

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring that this policy is carried out. A monitoring report will be drawn up by the Headteacher and considered by the Governing Body annually, or when the policy is next reviewed. The Governing Body recognises its duty to report progress against Disability Discrimination in its annual report to parents, and will include parallel reports on racial and sex discrimination in the annual report.

Further information

General guidance on equal opportunities may be found on the following websites:

- *The Department for Education and Skills, www.dfe.gov.uk;*
- *The Commission for Racial Equality, www.cre.gov.uk;*
- *The Disability Rights Commission, www.drc-gb.org;*
- *The Equal Opportunities Commission, www.eoc.org.uk.*

Frequently asked questions about disability discrimination in schools can be found in Annex 1 of circular 20/99

'What the Disability Discrimination Act' (DDA) 1995 means for Schools and LAs.

The Commission for Racial Equality advises on good practice in racial equality. The Commission has also issued a Code of Practice which Employment Tribunals must take into account when deciding cases.

The Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory and independent body working towards eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between the sexes. It is the main source for providing related information and advice to the general public and business.



The School Governing Body's Definition of Equality of Opportunity:

Equality of opportunity requires that everyone has an equal chance to develop themselves to their full potential. Consequently, equality of opportunity implies that:

- Equality of access exists for all;
- Individual choices are widened and everyone is treated fairly and with respect.
- Everyone is unique and has different needs and will be provided with a differentiated provision to meet those needs (equality of opportunity is underpinned by the idea of equality implies not sameness of service but diversity to meet diverse needs);
- No one experiences disadvantage or discrimination;
- Bullying and harassment, in any form, will not be tolerated;
- Change is managed for the benefit of all;
- Individuals and groups are allocated appropriate levels of support to ensure that their potential is fulfilled.

In relation to its more restricted role in the curriculum the School Governing Body defines equality of opportunity as a cross- curriculum dimension, which should be woven through the life, and work of the school, enlighten every area of the curriculum and be addressed by everyone who works within the school on a paid or voluntary basis.

Entitlement and Responsibilities

All learners and staff are entitled to work in an environment that meets their individual needs and develops them to their full potential.

All learners are entitled to full access to a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects, values and celebrates diversity within society locally, regionally and nationally.

All learners and staff are entitled to work in an environment that does not unfairly discriminate against them in any shape or form.

All learners and staff are entitled to be treated equitably and with respect irrespective of their gender, ability or sexual orientation, their social, cultural or religious background, or their family circumstances or age.

All learners and staff are entitled to work in an environment in which they do not encounter bullying or harassment in any shape or form.



All those associated in any shape or form with the school are entitled to equality of opportunity as defined in this Policy and Guidelines, and they should have responsibility for its successful implementation.

Guidelines:

The Curriculum

The Governing Body of St. Mary & St. Thomas Aquinas School believe as Christians that equality of opportunity should permeate all aspects of the curriculum and be promoted by all who work and learn in the school. There is no subject or programme of study that cannot be approached in a manner sympathetic to the aims of equality of opportunity. Consequently the School Governing Body will ensure that a curriculum review is undertaken annually which:

- Ensures that all pupils have access to the same broad and balanced curriculum and which is appropriately differentiated to meet individual needs and aspirations;
- Ensures that pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs, naming the school are welcomed into the community.
- Ensures that equality of opportunity is taught as a cross-curriculum dimension;
- Examines schemes of work and curriculum guidelines to ensure that full advantage is taken of the National Curriculum and Religious Education to promote equality of opportunity;
- Ensures that equality of opportunity is taught as a cross-curriculum dimension;
- Ensures that the curriculum reflects the diversity of the school community, and of society, locally, regionally and nationally;
- Ensures that teaching resources reflect the diversity of society locally, regionally and nationally;
- Ensures that teaching resources portray members of all groups, and particularly those groups most likely to encounter disadvantage and discrimination, in ways which are positive and non-stereotypical, especially in teaching groups which do not contain members of such groups;
- Considers the benefits of grouping pupils and students by gender and/or religion when particular activities are undertaken (e.g. Physical Education or swimming) or when particular topics are addressed (e.g. sex education); and
- Identifies how daily acts of collective worship can contribute to equality of opportunity.



Whole School Issues:

The School Governing Body believes that pupils learn from the informal as well as from the formal curriculum. Consequently it will ensure that:

- Equality of access exists for all pupils and staff;
- The aims, objectives and implications of inclusion are understood by all pupils, staff, parents and primary carers;
- Ensures that the school respects any dress code which is formally required By the pupil's Faith traditions.
- Accurate information for the sole purpose of monitoring equal opportunities is kept about the ethnic origin, first language, religious affiliation and special needs of all pupils;
- Assessment procedures do not disadvantage any group of pupils;
- Assessment procedures are adequately resourced to take account of the specific needs of minority ethnic pupils, and of pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties;
- Underachieving pupils are given support and encouragement required to enhance their performance without the performance of other pupils being affected detrimentally;
- Gifted and talented pupils are given support and encouragement required to enhance their performance without the performance of other pupils being affected detrimentally;
- Strategies are put in place to motivate and reintegrate disaffected pupils;
- Reliable and effective means exist to inform all parents and primary carers of their children's progress;
- Community languages other than English are valued and encouraged;
- All pupils are given opportunities to meet their religious needs, especially when important festivals occur;
- Specific dietary needs of pupils are respected;
- Members of all groups are welcomed and valued;
- Members of all groups are encouraged to play an active role in school affairs, perhaps making a contribution towards the governance of the school;



- As far as possible, staffing reflects the diversity of society locally, regionally and nationally; and
- All incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with in an effective and consistent manner.

Bullying and Harassment:

Equality of opportunity will not exist in a learning environment in which bullying and harassment occur. The School Governing Body have already adopted policies condemning behaviour that amounts to bullying or harassment, and the staff of the school are familiar with their content and implications. Bullying is defined as:

The intentional abuse of power by an individual or group with the intent and motivation to cause distress to another individual or group. It may be physical, sexual, verbal or psychological in nature. It may occur frequently or infrequently, regularly, or irregularly, but it should be taken seriously even if it has only occurred on one occasion.

Harassment is defined as:

Any behaviour or action otherwise directed at an individual that is found to be offensive to the recipient and might threaten an employee's job security or create an intimidating environment.

The Home Secretary's Action Plan for the implementation of the Macpherson Report reminds us that:

'All schools are required in law to have behaviour and discipline policies. They should have specific strategies in place to prevent all forms of bullying. They must also aim to promote good relations and mutual respect and tolerance between different racial groups. The DfE make clear in "School Inclusion: Pupil Support" guidance that all racist incidents are to be recorded and that parents and governors are informed of the nature of the incident and the action taken to deal with it. Governing Bodies will be expected to inform Local Education Authorities, on an annual basis, of the pattern and frequency of such incidents.'

- To record all incidents of bullying and harassment;
- To consider that procedures are in place to protect staff against claims of malicious bullying;
- To consider funding should be made available for staff training in areas of Equal Opportunities;



- To take appropriate action whenever such incidents occur;
- To ensure that victims are given appropriate support, including counselling if necessary;
- To ensure that perpetrators are aware of the seriousness of their actions and, if necessary, receive counselling;
- To ensure that an individual who makes a complaint about bullying or harassment is not victimised in any shape or form;
- To inform parents and primary carers when their children are involved in incidents of bullying or harassment as either victims or perpetrators;
- To undertake an annual review of the number and the nature of the incidents of bullying and harassment;
- To report the outcome of the above annual review to a meeting of the full Governing Body;
- To ensure that any reporting mechanism to the LA has been followed and;
- To develop protocols, including training and development, to ensure that the above is undertaken.