

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

EQUALITY POLICY



Status of Policy	Date:
Policy Revised:	May 2016
Agreed By Staff:	May 2016
Date Ratified By Governors:	
Date For Review:	Summer 2020

School aims

With God's help we aim to ...

- ❖ promote Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church as an integral part of our mission, providing a comprehensive religious education which expresses the life of faith through worship, liturgy and prayer
- ❖ ensure a Catholic ethos which will be experienced by all who enter the school and which will allow God's light to shine out of each child
- ❖ create an exciting and vibrant curriculum where high standards are achieved through high quality teaching, learning and assessment
- ❖ provide a warm emotional environment where learning is enjoyed by all, and in which all children are treated as special, individual and important
- ❖ provide a safe and healthy learning environment where behaviour is excellent, developing in children a respect for themselves and each other within a loving Catholic community
- ❖ be at the heart of the parish, an active part of the local community and of the universal Church
- ❖ sustain improvement through high quality leadership and governance
- ❖ recruit and retain high quality staff and use our time, effort and resources in the most efficient way to meet these aims

Policy Introduction

This policy sets out the school's approach to promoting equality, as defined within the Equality Act (2010). It covers sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pupils who are pregnant, undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment and the school's statutory duty to produce a Single Equality Scheme from April 2011.

This policy covers:

- the school's context
- aims and values
- the school's overall approach to promoting equality, diversity and tackling discrimination
- specific reference to sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pupils who are pregnant, undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment
- roles and responsibilities
- monitoring, reviewing and assessing impact.

The School Context – what sort of school are we?

St Edmund's school is located in Godalming, Surrey and serves local communities stretching from Godalming to Haslemere, Chiddingfold, Farncombe, Milford, Witley and Normandy.

Approximately* 65% of the children in the school are classed as White British (school census categorization). The other 35% of children derive from a variety of ethnic backgrounds with the next largest group being other white (10%), mixed (3.8%), Asian and African. (* as at 2016 census data)

The school serves a broadly affluent area, but takes a few children from a socially deprived area. The school's deprivation indicator is 0.07 (against a national average of 0.24). There are very few children who are eligible for free school meals. 80% of pupils have English as a first language. 53% boys; 47% girls. The school has below average mobility. (as at 2016 census)

Equality – aims and values

This policy supports meeting the general aims of the school in particular:

- To value and celebrate the uniqueness of the individual by fostering self respect and respect for the rights and needs of others.

- To ensure effective teaching of the whole curriculum which meets individual needs and interests, so all pupils enjoy and achieve in their learning.
- To provide a healthy and safe environment in which all pupils are further encouraged to develop their moral and spiritual well being.
- To ensure there is a strong and active partnership between school, home and church in which all make a positive contribution.
- To develop greater self awareness by cultivating pupil's appreciation of their impact on their community and the wider world.
- To uphold the fundamental British values and challenge behaviours contrary to these.

As a Catholic School St Edmund's regards its mission and purpose to be the 'living out of Gospel values'. Discrimination is incompatible with the example set by Christ in the Gospels.

The School's Approach to Promoting Equality

The overall objective of this Equality Policy is to provide a framework for the school to pursue its equality duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, promote equality of opportunity, and promote good relations and positive attitudes between people of diverse backgrounds in all its activities.

Through the Equality Policy, we should seek to ensure that no pupils, staff, parents, guardians or careers or any other person through their contact with the school receives less favourable treatment on any grounds which cannot be shown to be justified. This includes the protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act (2010) i.e, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pupils who are pregnant, undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment.

The principles of this policy apply to all members of the extended school community, pupils, staff, governors, parents and community members.

Particular provisions of the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law. It simplifies the law and it extends protection from discrimination in some areas.

Health Related Questions for Job Applicants

It is now unlawful for employers to ask health-related questions of applicants before job offer, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work. This means that schools should no longer, as a matter of

course, require job applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire as part of the application procedure. DfE are considering the implications of this in relation to existing guidance for schools on establishing fitness and ability to teach (as required by the Health Standards (England) Regulations 2003). In the meantime, schools are advised to review their existing practices to ensure they are complying with both the Health Standards Regulations and Section 60 of the Equality Act. Schools may decide to ask necessary health questions after job offer. In any case, they should ensure that any health-related questions are targeted, necessary and relevant to the job applied for.

Positive Action

New Positive Action provisions will allow schools to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. Such measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim. Previously a school providing – for example - special catch-up classes for Roma children or a project to engage specifically with alienated Asian boys might have been discriminating unlawfully by excluding children who didn't belong to these groups..

Victimisation

It is now unlawful to victimise a child for anything done in relation to the Act by their parent or sibling.

Auxiliary Aids

The Act will extend the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils. At the time of writing, this duty is on hold subject to consultation on implementation and approach.

Protected characteristics

It is unlawful for a school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of their

- sex,
- race,
- disability,
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment,
- pregnancy or maternity

Some of these characteristics are not present among the population of children or adults in our school community. Should this change, then this policy will be amended under advice.

It is also unlawful to discriminate because of the sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment of another person with whom the pupil is associated

Schools need to make sure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. There should be a regular (at least annual) check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of boys or girls.

The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. This school must ensure that pupils of all races are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. There should be a regular (at least annual) check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of such pupils.

Discrimination because of religion or belief means treating a person less favourably than another person is or would be treated, because of their religion or belief, or the religion or belief they are perceived to have, their lack of religion or belief, or the religion or belief, or lack of it, of someone else with whom they are associated.

The disability provisions in this Act are different from those for other protected characteristics in a number of ways. The Act defines disability as when a person has a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.' Some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect. Long term is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.

The school must not harass a pupil because of his disability – for example, a teacher shouting at the pupil because the disability means that he is constantly struggling with class-work or unable to concentrate.

- The school has a duty to make reasonable adjustments applies for disabled people - Where something we do places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.
- Schools will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils.

Schools are not expected to make adjustments that are not reasonable. It is for the school to consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of

each case. However, factors the school may consider when assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment may 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.

The school must implement an accessibility plan which is aimed at:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

This is a separate document – the Accessibility Plan.

Definitions

The Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people. This describes the most clear-cut and obvious examples of discrimination – for example if a school were to refuse to let a pupil be a prefect because she is a lesbian.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a “provision, criterion or practice” is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic. An example might be holding a parents’ meeting on a Friday evening, which could make it difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend. It is a defence against a claim of indirect discrimination if it can be shown to be “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”. This means both that the reason for the rule or practice is legitimate, and that it could not reasonably be achieved in a different way which did not discriminate.

Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is “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”. This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but potentially extends also to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, cause offence to a person because of a protected characteristic.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done (“a protected act”) in connection with the Act. A protected act might involve, for example, making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, or supporting another person’s complaint by giving evidence or information, but it includes anything that is done under or in connection with the Act. Even if what a person did or said was

incorrect or misconceived, for example based on a misunderstanding of the situation or of what the law provides, they are protected against retaliation unless they were acting in bad faith. The reason for this is to ensure that people are not afraid to raise genuine concerns about discrimination because of fear of retaliation.

A Catholic School

As a Catholic school, St Edmund's comes under the designation "Schools of a religious character" and as such the following additional statements apply:

The school may give priority in admissions to members of their own religion. The Admissions Code provides that this may only be done when a school is oversubscribed. The school can provide education with a Catholic focus, i.e. not giving equal preference to other religions.

It is unlawful, however, to give less favourable treatment of a pupil because they do not (or no longer) belong to the school's religion.

The content of a school curriculum is explicitly excluded from the Equality Act 2010.

A Cohesive Community

The statutory duty for schools to promote community cohesion is planned to be repealed. This school will continue to include work on Community Cohesion as an ongoing part of its mission.

Ensure that you include all types of communities, i.e. the school and its extended community, the school in its geographical community, the community of Britain, the global community, communities of interest (e.g. environmental groups, faith groups, ethnic or language groups), communities of friends. A paragraph stating how your school intends to contribute to community cohesion could be added here. For example,

In order to support all children to live in a modern society, we:

- educate the children to understand the different communities in Britain and around the world
- promote understanding and engagement between communities
- encourage all children and families to feel part of the wider community
- understand and respond to the needs and hopes of all our communities
- tackle discrimination
- ensure learning, teaching and the curriculum explores and addresses issues of diversity

Roles and Responsibilities

School governors are responsible for:

- making sure the school complies with current equality legislation
- making sure this policy and its procedures are followed

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- making sure the policy is readily available and that the governors, staff, pupils and their parents/carers know about it
- making sure its procedures are followed
- producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working, and providing training for them on the policy, if necessary
- making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these out
- taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination

All school staff are responsible for:

- modelling good practice, dealing with discriminatory incidents and being able to recognise and tackle bias and stereotyping
- promoting equality and avoiding discrimination against anyone
- keeping up to date with the law on discrimination and taking training and learning opportunities

Pupils are responsible for:

- keeping equality and diversity issues on the School Council agenda, through a shared input with staff on developing policies relating to this area. This may include:
 - the anti-bullying policy and specifically racist and homophobic bullying
 - developing school/class rules which challenge discriminatory behaviour

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- keeping equality and diversity issues on the Parents' Forum and PSA agenda, through a shared input with staff on developing policies relating to this area. This may include:
 - the anti-bullying policy and specifically racist and homophobic bullying
 - ensuring the above is explicit within our Home School Agreement

Visitors and contractors are responsible for:

- Knowing and following our equality policy

Responsibility for overseeing equality practices in the school lies with a named member of staff and governor.

Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating and monitoring work on equality issues
- Dealing with and monitoring reports of harassment (including racist and homophobic incidents)
- Monitoring the progress and attainment of potentially vulnerable groups of pupils (e.g. children and young people in care, children from minority ethnic/language or Traveller communities, disabled pupils etc.)
- Monitoring exclusions

Monitoring, Reviewing and Assessing Impact

The school's Equality Policy is supported by a Single Equality Scheme. This is linked to the School Development Plan and includes targets determined by the governing body for promoting equality.

The implementation of this policy is regularly monitored and reviewed by staff and governors to ensure that it is effective in eliminating discrimination, promoting access and participation, equality and good relations between different groups, and that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community.

Equality is to be discussed at staff meetings and is on the agenda of the Children and Learning committee at least annually.

Any pattern of inequality found as a result of impact assessment should be used to inform future planning and decision-making.

The Headteacher and a named governor who is responsible for equality will monitor specific outcomes as detailed in the Single Equality Scheme. The Headteacher provides monitoring reports for review by the Governing Body. These should refer to the school population, key initiatives and progress against targets and future plans.