

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### **Introduction**

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, our Equality and Diversity Policy reflects our strong belief that all children have entitlement to a broad and varied education and experiences, which allow them to achieve their full potential within the context of stimulating and exciting experiences rich in faith. Equality of opportunity is a fundamental aspect of the ethos of every school in the country. It is the responsibility of the governors, headteacher and all personnel involved in the school to provide leadership in the development and implementation of effective policies to promote equality of opportunity.

Medway Education Authority is committed to the general principle of equal opportunity for all pupils irrespective of race, religion, gender, language, disability or family background and support initiatives designed to further this principle. The authority recognises that sex discrimination can be either overt or covert and that there is a need to identify and to take action to counter all kinds of discrimination. Overt discrimination can take place in school organisation and discipline and in extra-curricular activities – such discrimination is illegal.

Covert discrimination relates to the assumptions, beliefs and values acquired over a long period of time, which affects pupil's instinctive responses. It may be shown in the attitudes of teachers, parents and other adults towards pupils and in the attitudes of pupils towards themselves and each other.

### **Purpose:**

#### **Direct and Indirect Discrimination**

Following the spirit of the school's development plan, we aim to ensure that every pupil and teacher is given an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential. In addition, each individual is entitled to learn, teach or work in a supportive environment and to benefit from the diversity of our school community.

To meet these aims, we are committed to:

- Equal access and treatment for everyone
- Being responsive to changing needs
- Educating and informing children, staff and parents about the issues in this policy
- Avoiding prejudice
- Promoting mutual respect, regardless of differences
- Working to an agreed code of conduct which can be modified, monitored and evaluated in accordance with current best practice in the area of equal opportunities

## Objectives

- To promote a positive self image in all children and to respect their individuality, providing for all pupils according to their needs
- To ensure quality of opportunity permeates the whole curriculum and ethos of the school
- In delivering the curriculum ensure it contains non-stereotypical images in order to overcome preconceived ideas of gender, ethnic origin, culture or religion
- To include in resource books, materials and equipment that are multicultural and non-sexist, providing positive images of all groups
- Ensure that the organisation of the school is sensitive to the needs of all
- To acknowledge the richness and diversity of British society and to help prepare children for their part in that society
- To develop a positive attitude to equal opportunity by all staff, parents, helpers, governors, children and all who participate in the school

## The law

Unlawful discrimination occurs when one person receives less favourable treatment because of their gender, marital status, race or disability.

The law is extensive and complex in these areas. Accordingly, the school will provide general guidance on matters which require clarification whilst ensuring professional guidance is sought when specific reference is needed to the:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Equal Pay Amendment 1984
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Relevant EU legislation

It must also be borne in mind that “ignorance of the law is no defence” and other forms of discrimination (on the grounds of age, sexuality or religion) should be avoided.

In most cases, the nature of less favourable treatment will be clear and common sense will dictate the necessary action to take, usually after reference to the Head teacher.

However, indirect discrimination can be more difficult to detect. Examples include:

An advertisement for new teaching staff which requires “applicants to be more than 5’10” tall.

*This is unlawful sex discrimination as the majority of women under 5’10” in height and would be denied the same opportunity as men.*

An admission policy for pupils stating that “children must speak excellent English”.

*This is unlawful racial discrimination as it is likely to preclude candidates from other countries/races.*

Where doubt exists, ask the Head teacher.

### **Staff**

The school values diversity amongst the staff. In all staffing appointments, the most suitable candidate will be appointed on professional criteria and recruitment carried out in a manner consistent with equal opportunity practice.

### **Policy guidelines**

The following guidelines are brief and cover the main areas of concern only. The school’s governing body will ensure that a comprehensive up-to-date file is maintained regarding best practice in this area. This will be supplemented by maintenance of, or ready access to, appropriate material on current legislation.

### **Identification**

Teaching staff and school helpers will observe children at play and in classrooms for unacceptable behaviour. Suitable counselling will be given at the time, but repeated abuse will be recorded for discussion with the Head teacher, parents and the governing body. Staff will also be encouraged to adopt the same approach with their colleagues and parents, with a view to setting an example for children to follow. This document, and others relevant to standards of behaviour (e.g. on bullying), will be circulated for reading by the governing body and staff at least once a year.

An ‘open door’ policy will continue to operate at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School in order that parents may discuss their concerns with the Head teacher and staff. Equally, early advice should be given of disabilities, which may affect a child’s performance and/or behaviour at school. Consultation with parents, GPs, health visitors, speech therapists etc. may also be sought in appropriate circumstances. The school will maintain clear, factual and up-to-date records to identify patterns of behaviour, which are contrary to our aims.

## **Positive Action**

Unlike positive discrimination, which is in itself unlawful, positive action will be fostered in line with current best practice:

- Staff will continue to use examples in their teaching to demonstrate the benefits of a mixed society and the contributions made to our history by individuals of all genders, races, age groups etc.
- Role playing is seen as an essential means to address the issues raised in this area
- Performance appraisals of the teaching staff will be conducted within a framework to promote positive action for equal opportunities
- Teamwork is encouraged in all aspects of school-life to show the advantages of pooling experience, knowledge and various points of view
- Job vacancies will be widely advertised to promote a diversity of candidates

## **Daily procedures**

Children, parents and staff will be given equal treatment, equal opportunity to voice their opinions and equal access to resources. We will not tolerate harassment of people based on their gender or transgender status, race, disability or age group. Teaching material and other forms of communication are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance with this policy. Positive action, especially by pupils, will continue to be rewarded and made known to the wider school community. In addition to the curriculum and ethos of the school, all staff will reinforce good behaviour in the area of equal opportunities and involve peer groups in the approval (or disapproval) process. Staff meetings will include equal opportunity issues, with particular reference to this policy and its inclusion in curriculum activity. Clear and constant messages will be given regarding the school's values and disciplinary procedures – in line with the policy on bullying.

## **Involving parents**

As with all school policies, there is a critical role to be played by parents. Several aspects of this document have referred to the consultation process and the need to reinforce good behaviour in our community. Parents will continue to be informed of their child's behaviour, good and bad, together with any aspects of their attitude towards others which gives rise to concern. Initial liaison regarding the discrimination problem is expected to be of an informal nature – by the class teacher or Head teacher. However, records will be maintained of abuses and ongoing concerns will be discussed in depth by the Head teacher and parents. Parents who are unavailable/unwilling to discuss individual cases will receive a letter inviting their response, a copy of which will be held on file.

All form of discrimination by any person within the school are to be treated very seriously and a careful note kept of any such incidents. It must always be made clear that such behaviour is unacceptable. Subsequent incidents should be reported to the head teacher – in her absence the deputy headteacher – when a decision will be made as to involvement of the parents of the children concerned.

In the event that formal disciplinary proceedings are contemplated, or if co-operation is not evident, the governing body will be consulted and a plan of action agreed. Continued unacceptable behaviour could result in exclusion procedures for the pupil.

### **Success criteria**

The measurement of equal opportunities in practice requires a variety of criteria to be assessed, of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. Key areas of consideration are:

- The level of complaints by pupils, staff and parents will be reviewed each term, or more frequently if unsatisfactory trends are evident
- Attendance records, punctuality and unauthorised absences will be examined in this respect
- The degree of pupil:pupil and pupil:teacher interaction during learning/play periods is deemed equally important
- SATs results need constant attention and samples analysed to detect signs of under-achievement against baseline assessments, teachers' expectations etc. Such comparisons will pay regard to equal opportunities factors

### **Practice around the school**

- All children should have work displayed at some time during the school year
- Children with special educational needs must be given equal access to the curriculum
- All children have equal access to extra-curricular activities
- Staff need to have an awareness of the demands of the individual and endeavour to give equal attention and speak in the same manner to all children, avoiding bias when praising or disciplining
- All children should have equal opportunities to help with jobs and mixed groups should move PE equipment
- All children must have an opportunity to take books home to read
- Children should be involved in discussing and affirming their ownership of class rules at some point in each academic year
- Parents and link governors have an opportunity to view the type of teaching/work undertaken in support of the curriculum. This should encourage an independent perspective of the way in which the 'wider community' is portrayed

Our aim is to have a zero incidence of, and tolerance for, discriminatory behaviour. The school should exude a confident, progressive approach to the aims set out in this policy, actively demonstrating the benefits of mixed contributions and teamwork. Staff, students and volunteers are prohibited from using their mobile phones during any teaching session. Staff, students and volunteers will never use their camera phones to take photographs of children in the school. Parents are asked not to use their mobile phones in the classroom.

All photographs taken for assessment purposes will be done so on school owned cameras and will remain the property of school. Permission should be received from all Parents/Guardians regarding the taking and publishing of pictures.

### **Management and organisation**

- To review all policies to ensure that each area, whether a whole school issue or a curriculum subject, takes account of the specific ways in which equal opportunities applies
- To monitor academic achievement by analysing SAT's results by gender

### **Ethos**

- To ensure displays around the school reflect a variety of positive images, which are free from stereotyping associated with gender, race or physical disability
- To plan a programme of assemblies, which include opportunities to challenge prejudice, question stereotyping and enhance understanding of our multicultural and pluralistic society
- To ensure that all assemblies are free from messages or language which undermine principles of tolerance or understanding
- To encourage adults from a broad spectrum of society to visit this school particularly to demonstrate role models which are non-traditional for their sex, ethnicity or disability
- To devise schemes of playground use which avoid domination of space by any particular group
- To provide training and support in order to ensure that playtime supervisors uphold the principles of equal opportunities in their work with children
- To include in the school's behaviour policy a specific reference to the avoidance of sexual or racial harassment and abuse, together with clearly understood procedures for dealing with any occurrences
- To ensure that sanctions used in the school are the same for boys and girls and applied equally

- To encourage an understanding of the ways in which language can be used to stereotype and undermine confidence
- To make clear that sexist and racist abuse is unacceptable
- To ensure that school publications reflect the commitment to equal opportunities and are free from gender or cultural bias
- To provide access throughout the school site for wheelchair users and people with other disabilities, as resources allow
- To encourage and develop positive links with the local community
- To make all visitors feel welcome

### **Classroom practice and delivery**

- To ensure equal access to resources, equipment and toys
- To take steps to build the skills and confidence of children in areas where they may traditionally be lacking in confidence, e.g. dance or sewing for boys, football or construction for girls
- To ensure equal opportunities for talking and listening in whole class discussion, group work and paired work
- To divide teacher time equitably between girls and boys
- To create an environment in which cooperation is central and in which children will work in a range of grouping contexts (single or mixed sex, mixed ability, random or compatible) comfortably and with purpose
- To teach children the skills to resolve conflicts and become assertive

### **Curriculum planning and design**

- To review the taught curriculum and actively seek opportunities to address the issues of equal opportunities
- To ensure that multicultural issues are not presented in a tokenistic way
- To be aware of, and challenge, bias and stereotypical viewpoints within our teaching and language, e.g. only presenting images of Africa or India as poor and rural

- To draw on examples from many cultural traditions and recognise Britain as having a diverse cultural background
- To help children explore the idea of 'stereotyping' in order that they can make more informed choices in relation to their identity (i.e. gender, ethnic or cultural background, disability)
- To be aware of the balance of male/female roles, disabled/able-bodied and roles from a variety of cultural backgrounds, when choosing historical figures or artists', composers', authors' work, etc, as a focus for a curriculum area

### **Assessment**

- To monitor assessment procedures to ensure that they are not distorted by stereotyped attitudes and expectations

### **Resources**

- To prepare and select resources which are free from cultural or gender bias, wherever possible
- Where their use is unavoidable, to employ biased resources as a means of provoking discussion of equal opportunities issues

**Review Date:** June 2020

**Next Review Date:** June 2022