



ST.MARK'S CE SCHOOL
ONE SCHOOL - SERVING ALL - THROUGH EXCELLENCE

St Mark's CE School

Equalities Policy

2024 - 2026

Policy Owner: Stephanie Bryant (Executive Headteacher)

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Introduction

St Mark's CE School is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every member of our school community and where all members are equal.

We believe that the Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Our approach to equality is based on the following key principles:

- All members of our community are of equal value. Whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.
- We recognise, respect and value differences. We take account of this and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected, embraced and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

- We actively promote positive attitudes, mutual respect and relationship building between groups and communities different from each other.
- We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
- We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
- We have the highest expectations of all our students. We expect that all students can make good progress and that all members of the community can achieve their highest potential.
- We work to raise standards for all students, with a distinct focus on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of students raises standards across the whole school.

Purpose of the policy

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against students or treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity.

Age, marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” but are not part of the school provisions related to students.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** or “general duty” requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

This policy describes how the school is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

Development of the policy

This policy takes account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010, The Equality Act 2010 and schools - Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities (May 2014) and also the most recent Ofsted inspection framework, which places a strong focus on improving the learning and progress of different groups and on closing gaps in standards.

We note that OFSTED has a statutory duty to report on the outcomes, progress and provision for students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

Links to other policies and documentation

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the approach outlined in this policy underpins all decision making in relation to our school transformation plan, policy reviews, self evaluation, the school prospectus, school website and newsletters.

There are also references to equalities in the behaviour, attendance, admissions, SEN and anti-bullying policies, as well as minutes of meetings involving governors, the whole staff, and the senior leadership team and the student councils.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the ways we comply with this are found in all our related HR policies.

Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our students and the way we provide access for students to facilities, services, trips and visits. We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled students – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled students and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.

The Executive Headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities. We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.

We take seriously the need to consider equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day-to-day life of the school.

We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all, working together and the need for all to embrace diversity. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against students by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

St Mark's CE School's Behaviour Policy makes reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for students with a disability. We closely monitor data on exclusions and absence from school for evidence of over-representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice based bullying

The school challenges all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around race, religion or belief, for example anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation, including homophobic and transphobic attitudes.

All staff receive guidance on how incidents of bullying and prejudice should be reported, recorded and dealt with. We treat all bullying incidents equally seriously. A record of prejudice related incidents is kept and a report is provided to the governors about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how we dealt with them. This data is reviewed termly.

Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups

We know the needs of our school population and we collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements. We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our student admissions meetings. We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of students and use this data to support school improvement. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age-appropriate literacy and number skills.

We collect, analyse and publish data on:

- The school population by gender and ethnicity;
- The % of students identified as having a special educational need and/or disability
- Each year group – in terms of ethnicity, gender and proficiency in English;
- Inequalities of outcome and participation, related to ethnicity, gender and disability and proficiency in English

All data is analysed in relation to the standards reached by different groups at the end of each data collection: White British, FSM and non-FSM, Bangladeshi, Black African, Somali, Black Caribbean, EAL, all SEN and sub-categories, Looked after Children and other groups specific to each year cohort.

We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups. This data can be found in the Equality Data Analysis on the school's website.

We are aware that the legislation relates mainly to current but also to future students – we will for example, be sufficiently prepared if a Visually Impaired, Physically disabled, or student of an ethnic minority group not already within our school population joins our school.

We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any students' achievement or that seeks to define their potential as learners, such as "less able".

We use a range of teaching strategies that ensure we meet the needs of all students. We provide support to students at risk of underachieving.

We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between, for example:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- girls and boys

We ensure equality of access for all students to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.

Our buildings are fully accessible. There is excellent provision for those in wheelchairs and those with mobility impairments. Accessible toilets are located for both students and adults on each floor. There are two lifts in the school that give access to all areas and a medical space within the building provides accommodation for changing, hygiene and other specific needs. All classrooms and learning spaces are suitable for wheelchair users. The acoustics in the building have been designed to support those with hearing impairments.

Positive Action

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of students with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the school's Equality Objectives.

What we are doing to foster good relations

We prepare our students for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our students. We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE, citizenship and across the curriculum. We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping. We promote a whole school ethos that challenges prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.

We provide opportunities for students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures. We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and promote positive images of people from a diverse range of cultures.

We provide opportunities for students to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences. We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors, whole school events, eg Black History Month and Anti-bullying week and curriculum drop days.

We include Equalities matters in our Newsletters to parents and Carers and in items on the School website.

Other ways we address equality issues

We maintain records of all training relating to equalities. Our monitoring records include evaluations of aspects of equalities. We keep minutes of meetings where equality issues are discussed. We have a rolling programme for reviewing all of our school policies in relation to equalities and their impact on the progress, safety and well-being of our students. The implications for equalities of all new policies and practices are considered before they are introduced.

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- review relevant feedback from parent questionnaires, parents' evenings, the parent forum, Governors' parent- consultation meeting and parent input into EHC Plans, and other SEND meetings.
- secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events
- review feedback and responses from students and groups of students, from the student council, whole school surveys on children's attitudes to self and school, in every Area Review
- analyse issues raised in Annual Reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans/Personalised Provision Maps, mentoring and support; ensure that we secure responses and feedback at Governing Body meetings and from the governing body's working groups.

Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups

Publishing Equality Objectives In line with this policy and the Bow School vision we publish an Equality Action plan that is monitored by the Governing Body and its relevant committees.

St Mark's CE School vision is to ensure that as a school we are:

- Delivering excellence
- Encouraging ambition
- Uncovering talent
- Maintaining a focus on progress
- Working closely with our parents
- Ensuring that communication is effective, timely and informative
- Making good use of our many partnerships to underpin the success of students and staff

This vision applies to all members of the school community equally and seeks, through school planning priorities, to reduce attainment gaps between different groups and to develop a thriving

school community where all achieve their full potential, regardless of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

The equality objectives that we identify stem from our school's priorities and are the outcome of reviews and analysis of data and other evidence. They also take into account national and local priorities and issues.

We evaluate our success in meeting the Public Service Equality Duties by the extent to which we achieve improved outcomes for the different groups. We produce Equality data Analysis which informs our discussions about the Equality Objectives.

Our Equality Objectives are:

- To improve outcomes for all students including those with protected characteristics so that they make progress at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment and ability.
- To enable all students including those in groups with protected characteristics, to make a positive contribution to school life.
- To promote mental health and well-being so that all members of the school community are valued and supported, regardless of special educational needs and disability, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
- To develop processes around all transition points for all students, including those in groups with protected characteristics to ensure that appropriate advice, guidance and support is in place to ensure successful transition to next steps.
- To promote equal working conditions for all staff regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, sex, religion, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

Monitoring and reviewing objectives

We review and update our equality objectives every two years and report annually to the governing body on progress towards achieving them. We involve and consult staff, students, governors and parents and carers.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

Every governing body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Governors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g. data) and qualitative evidence (e.g. surveys)

Executive Headteacher and Leadership team

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

Teaching and Support Staff

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- challenge prejudice and discrimination
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability
- maintain the highest expectations of success for all students
- support different groups of students in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

We will provide training and guidance on Equalities for all staff new to the school as part of the induction procedure. We will go through the expectations and duties of the Equality Act at a whole staff meeting annually.

Visitors

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will provide guidance and information in school newsletters, and on the website, to enable them to do this.

Key contacts

Staff responsible for equalities – Executive Headteacher

Equal Opportunities for staff

We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.

All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Monitoring and Reviewing the policy

We review the information about equalities in the policy every three years and make adjustments as appropriate. Our review involves students, staff, governors and parents and carers.

Disseminating the policy

This Equality Policy along with the Equality Objectives and data is available on the school website. It is also available:

- as paper copies in the school office
- as a summary in the staff handbook
- as part of induction for new staff and new governors.

We ensure that the whole school community knows about the policy, objectives and data through the school newsletter, website, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications.

We publish on the school's website copies of relevant policies and guidance, including those on behaviour, anti-bullying and special educational needs.