



# Equalities & Diversity Policy 2017

## School ethos, values and philosophy

Our school motto “UT SINT UNUM - THAT WE MAY BE ONE” summarises our belief that we are one with God and one with each other; it also underpins the partnership between home, school and parish. This strong relationship enables us to achieve a family atmosphere providing a secure, happy, learning environment with Christ at the centre of everything we do. Respect for each other and treating others with dignity is central to this belief. Because of this our school takes our duties to equality seriously not just because we are required to do so by law but because it is an intrinsic part of who we are.

## Aims of this policy

- To help governors and school staff understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010
- To help governors and school staff understand the personal characteristics that are protected by the law
- To understand the behaviour that is unlawful

By having this policy and knowing the above we aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Remove or minimise disadvantages
- Take steps to meet different needs
- Encourage participation where it is disproportionately low
- Foster good relations between people (whether they have protected characteristics or not)

## Legislative Context

In writing our policy we are mindful to our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This means:

- Our responsibilities and duties are not only as an employer but as a body which carries out a public function and provides a service
- We have an obligation to our current pupils and our future pupils
- We want to avoid discrimination and promote equality as this will lead to a school where our children flourish and are successful. This is because children who have a good education and secure skill set combined with a respect for others will have better opportunities and as a result, more successful lives in the future
- We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments wherever it is practical to do so. This is to avoid the disadvantage a pupil experiences because of their disability

## Protected characteristics

The Equality Act protects employees and pupils from discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race

- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

**Note:**

- Age and being married or in a civil partnership are not protected characteristics for the school provisions. This means that we have to be mindful of these as an employer but not in relation to our pupils.
- School provisions means the categories of people covered i.e. prospective pupils, current pupils and former pupils. This means that we will not discriminate in the way we admit pupils or how we treat them while they are with us.

**What is equality?**

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically, certain groups of people with particular characteristics e.g. race, disability, sex and sexuality, have experienced discrimination.

**What is discrimination?**

We know that unlawful discrimination can be direct, indirect, related to disability or a failure to make reasonable adjustments. We know that any form of harassment or victimisation is also unlawful. We also know that pupils with protected characteristics may be disadvantaged economically or socially so as a school we will take positive steps to address this wherever we can.

**Direct discrimination** occurs when a pupil is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic (or perceived protected characteristic) e.g. refusing admission to a child because of their race. It can also occur if a pupil is treated less favourably because of their **association** with someone else who has a protected characteristic e.g. sibling, parent etc.

**Indirect discrimination** occurs when something that is applied to all pupils has the effect of putting a pupil with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to pupils who do not have this characteristic. It does not matter that this was unintentional.

**Discrimination arising from disability** occurs when a disabled pupil is treated less favourably because of something connected with their disability.

**Harassment** includes unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone with a protected characteristic.

**Victimisation** is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so.

**How do we ensure we are complying with our duty?**

We review our policy and our practice regularly. We share our policy with those people who are responsible for implementing the policy or are affected by it. We listen to the views of others and any feedback that is given. We take advice and attend training to ensure our knowledge is up to date.

## **Examples of current school practice**

Please note these are only some examples:

### **Admissions**

Our Admissions Policy complies with all legislation. Previously we have made changes to our school building in order for a child with a wheelchair to be admitted to our school.

### **Food items**

School lunches always include halal meat and vegetarian options. 'Birthday basket' sweets only include treats that anyone could eat.

### **Uniform policy**

We do not allow extreme hairstyles but accept hairstyles that may have cultural significance e.g. afro or cornrow.

### **Exclusions**

At St Louis School exclusion is extremely rare but our policies and procedures for behaviour management have taken into account our responsibilities under the Equality Act. For example, we know that children with disabilities or special educational needs may have behaviour that is more challenging and this needs to be considered when making decisions.

### **School Visits**

We only have visits where all pupils can participate and risk assessments for every trip are undertaken. In those risk assessments we consider what adjustments may need to be made. In the past we have taken extra staff on residential visits, changed the activities that we participate in in order so that everyone can take part or asked the company involved to make adjustments to equipment and routines.

### **Engagement with Parents**

We want parents to become involved in their children's education so we will identify barriers and try to overcome them. Our Parent Focus group includes a cross section of parents and we try to develop practices that can allow the engagement of all parents. We expect parents to set the right example and will challenge and report any actions that contravene this.

### **Record keeping**

We have a rigorous system for the recording and reporting of incidents.

### **Curriculum**

What is taught in the curriculum is crucial to tackling key inequalities for pupils including gender stereotyping, preventing bullying and raising attainment and aspiration. As well as using material and resources that are inclusive we challenge discriminatory actions and language. We are mindful that as a Catholic School we follow Canon Law but this is always in the context of the laws of our country. For example, this means that when we teach the RE topic marriage we will state 'that in the context of this topic marriage in the Catholic faith means between one man and one woman but we know in civil law that can mean a union of two men or two women'.

We find opportunities within our curriculum where the cultural heritage of our families can be celebrated such as the Year 4 topic 'Myself and the World Around me'. We also actively teach about equality through the use of story books and activities such as equality workshops for our children in Years 5 & 6.

*These are just a few examples of current school practice*

## **As an employer**

The Governing Body is committed to the principles of dignity at work for all employees and will ensure that people are treated equally. For prospective employees the Governors ensure that our recruitment process is rigorous but fair. This process will have reference not only to the Equality Act but to our Safeguarding responsibilities as well.

Some of our school practices include:

- Provision of disabled facilities
- Flexible working policy
- A dress code which is non discriminatory
- Support for training, including language acquisition
- A staff handbook and code of conduct which makes expectations for staff clear
- Effective policies, including disciplinary and complaints
- Regular review of school systems

## **Individual responsibilities:**

The promotion of equality and respect for others is the responsibility of all members of the school community. In addition to what has been written previously in this policy:

**All Staff** are responsible for:

- Dealing with incidents of discrimination and knowing how to identify and challenge bias and stereotyping
- Not discriminating on grounds of race, disability, or other equality issues;
- Keeping up to date with equalities legislation by understanding our school policy and attending training events organised by the school or Local Authority
- Always setting a good example by treating all members of our school community in a respectful way and complying with our staff code of conduct

**All Parents/Carers** are responsible for:

- Their children's education
- Being aware of and complying with our Equalities policy
- Positively influencing their children's expectations about education as well as their attitudes and behaviour towards other pupils, staff and senior management, including the Governors
- Understanding the ethos of the school and becoming involved in school life (e.g. open days, extended services, Parent Focus group, informal discussions with staff, parent consultation evenings etc)

**All Pupils** are responsible for:

- Being aware of and complying with our Equalities policy (relevant to their age and understanding)
- Not discriminating on grounds of race, sexual orientation, religion, belief or non-belief, gender; or other equality issues
- Reporting any racist incident or act of discrimination in which they were directly or indirectly involved either in or out of school
- Understanding, valuing and celebrating diversity
- Challenging stereotypes and prejudices
- Treating others as their equals

## **Complaints**

Our school has a complaints policy which is on our school website. If any member of our school community believes they have been discriminated against or have been treated unfairly in some way they may use our existing complaints procedure in order to make their complaint known. However, at St Louis School we always try to resolve any disputes by speaking openly with one another and without resorting to formal means. In order to do this we would ask you in the first instance to raise any concerns you have with our school office and they will know how best to deal with your concern.

## **Monitoring and Reviewing**

We have a rolling programme for reviewing our school policies. When policies are reviewed, governors have regard to the promotion of all aspects of equality within each policy.

We regularly review the impact of our policies on the needs, entitlements and outcomes for pupils, staff and parents. We pay specific attention to the impact that our policies have on the attainment of pupils from different groups.

We make regular assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to track pupils' progress, as they move through the school. As part of this process, we regularly monitor the performance of different groups, to ensure that all groups of pupils are making the best possible progress. We use this information to adjust future teaching and learning plans, as necessary. Resources are available to support groups of pupils where the information suggests that progress is not as good as it should be. The governing body receives regular updates on pupil performance information.

School performance information is compared to national data and Local Authority data, to ensure that pupils are making appropriate progress when compared to all schools and to schools in similar circumstances. As well as monitoring pupil performance information, we also regularly monitor a range of other information.

This relates to:

- Exclusions;
- Incidents of racism, disability discrimination, sexual harassment and all forms of bullying;
- Parental involvement.

**Date: February 2017**

**To be reviewed: February 2019**

**Chair of Governors, Mrs B Bromley**