

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Person Responsible: Miss M A Jackson

Date: September 2016

Review: Autumn 2017

Related to RE, Special Needs, SRE, and Behaviour Policies and policy on Pupils with Medical Needs, Child Protection Procedure, Appointment of Staff

The aims of this policy are as follows:

1. *To ensure that all members of the school feel sufficiently secure and safe to be able to achieve their potential.*
2. *To ensure that all members of the school are encouraged to develop as individuals and to value themselves as such.*

This school aims to prepare all children to live and work harmoniously, preparing them to live and positively participate in a multi-racial and culturally diverse society.

We are committed to the view that all children are of equal value and have equal rights to education, whatever their race, gender class, disability learning need, sexual orientation, age or religion. This is central to the schools philosophy and ethos.

The equal opportunities policy of the school takes into account and recognises the role of anti-racist and anti-sexist teaching and the need for positive action and strategies to combat all forms of inequality.

The schools curriculum, therefore, offers: equal access, a broad balanced curriculum, recognises the need for relevant and differentiated teaching where necessary, so that all pupils can reach their full potential.

The School's SRE (Sex & Relationships Education) Guidelines is about correcting misinformation about "facts of life" and the relative roles of men/women.

Great emphasis is placed on Special Needs at St. Mary's so all children are included.

Equal opportunities in relation to access to the curriculum but practice in the classroom often marginalises able children. Target setting for all, addresses this issue at St. Mary's.

The Equal Opportunities policy is reflected in the Staffing Policy. All appointments are made without prejudice to race, marital status, gender and politics although an appointment would not be made if the individual would not support the Catholic ethos.

We have reviewed all literature, which is sent to candidates to ensure that it does not present men and women in stereotyped roles.

We follow Greenwich's guidelines to maternity support leave and paternity leave.

The policy of St. Mary's School is to promote equal access by all staff to the school's policies, aims and resources and to promote positive participation by all in the construction and delivery of the School Improvement Plan.

As a guide, interview panels should normally consist of no more than three people. Although for Head and Deputy positions the panel size may be greater than three. Where possible, the interview panel shows a gender mix.

Questions asked at interviews will relate strictly to the requirements of the job and to the training and experience of candidates. Questions about marriage plans or family intentions are not relevant. Exceptionally, it may be relevant to ask candidates about their domestic arrangements, for example, where a job involves unsociable hours, extensive travel or moving house. In such circumstances, the situation should be discussed objectively. Managers are advised to indicate why they consider the questions relevant to the job requirement. We have taken note of this advice at St. Mary's.

There are a number of factors that can work against the benefit of Equality of Opportunity in Education:

- Attitudes and expectations
- Offensive language
- Unaccountable behaviour
- Physical handicaps or differences

A pupil who is different in any way, can sometimes be singled out by their peer group and treated in an unaccountable way. Our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy picks up on the practical issues surrounding such undesirable situations.

It is common for people to make assumptions about others for a variety of reasons. These assumptions can result in prejudice and the adoption of inappropriate attitudes and expectations. Our school policy is to continually try and involve the parents as partners.

It is our job to deal with misinformation where:

- a) the assumptions are not founded on fact and are therefore inaccurate;
- b) despite being inaccurate they can become self-fulfilling prophecies and result in changes of behaviour which are undesirable;
- c) some individuals may feel undervalued and as a result, underachieve;
- d) some individuals feel that whatever they do, it does not change or influence the expectations of others;
- e) some individuals feel that they have to work twice as hard as others to achieve the same recognition;
- f) students can be pressurised into behaving in a particular way because to do otherwise will illicit disapproval from others.

Classroom Practice

For members of a school to have equal opportunities to benefit from the education offered, it is necessary for them not only to be free from pressure from others and to feel safe and secure, but also that the learning environment is appropriate for their needs. This is covered by each individual Subject Co-ordinators policy and includes information on how:

- a) Content of lessons and teaching materials to ensure that all groups of students feel equally valued and that their individual interests are catered for;
- b) Preparation and presentation of lessons so that all students are given equal access.
- c) All students need to be given equal attention and encouragement.

To ensure that all children are gaining equal access to the curriculum and achieving each according to their ability we need to ensure that we plan, record and assess children's achievements in learning accurately and this needs to be reflected in our agreed approaches to planning, assessing and recording.

We continually review our policy and carry out audits to see if we are achieving equality in our school.

With these points in mind, THE SCHOOL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES can be summarised as follows:

1. to develop the Christian environment within a Catholic School, through worship and the development of the whole person;
2. to allow each student to realise his/her full potential, socially and academically;
3. to allow the students to develop a sense of purpose;
4. to allow students to develop self-respect, humility and respect for others;
5. to allow pupils to develop self-discipline;

6. to provide the best environment for the learning process and to encourage a participation in the life of the school in and out of lesson time;
7. to enable staff to fulfil their chosen career by providing opportunities for development. (Reference School and Staff Development Policy/Induction Policy – Performance Management - being involved in Policy making and programmes with parents.

There are certain types of pupil behaviour in school, which would be seen to hinder pupils in the fulfilment of these aims. At St. Mary's School, we believe that all pupils have the right to be treated and valued equally. This means that at all times pupils should show respect for others in the way they behave. This includes the ways pupils speak to, listen to, speak about, write about and act towards one another. Class rules are drawn up each year by each class with their teacher.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour are: bullying, offensive name-calling, threats used by groups or individuals to control the behaviour of others and prevent them from working to their best ability. It should be remembered that graffiti can be just as offensive as spoken abuse and can do more harm because it reaches a wider audience.

In addition, a school Equal Opportunities Policy applies to pupil/staff relationships; all members of the school should endeavour to adopt a Christian attitude towards one another at all times.

Racism (See Racial Equality Policy)

Racism is a particularly virulent form of prejudice and needs a great deal of attention. The following are some ideals of how it can be combated.

1. Pupils' names are pronounced correctly.
2. Attention is paid to spelling names correctly at all times.
3. Literature in school includes names from a wide variety of cultures.
4. Racist language is categorically rejected.
5. Racial stereotypes are never be used or allowed. Those in classical literature must be made explicit to pupils and contextualised.
6. Bi-lingualism should be seen as an asset, pupils should feel free to use the home-language as and when they need to, learning in the home-language is to be encouraged where appropriate and necessary. Work in the home-language should be valued.
7. Bi-lingual pupils and parents must be allowed to nominate an interpreter when necessary.

Lack of fluency in the English language should not be used as an indication of academic potential.

The Curriculum

The curriculum in the main is the vehicle by which this policy will be delivered. We are continually aware that in our RE and Behaviour policy, we must practice what we preach. The success of the policy will depend on a good partnership with Home/ School/ Parish links.