



Sacred Heart School

Equal Opportunities Policy

At Sacred Heart School we all aspire to provide a happy, safe and secure environment in which every child is encouraged to achieve their full potential...

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Contents

Statement of Commitment.....	3
Resources and Materials.....	5
Organisation of Learning	5
Language	6
Extra-curricular provision	6
Staffing and Staff Development.....	6
Harassment and bullying.....	6
Awareness of the policy	6
Monitoring and Review	7
Legislation	7

This policy statement outlines the commitment of the staff and governors to ensuring that equal opportunities are available to all members of the school community including pupils, teaching staff, support staff, governors, parents, carers, visitors to the school and students on placement.

Statement of commitment

At Sacred Heart School, we are committed to advancing equality and promoting respect for difference and diversity through the school's vision, ethos and values. Equal Opportunities at school is about ensuring that all children and adults have equality of opportunity in terms of access and outcome throughout all aspects of school life and that their life chances for the present and future are not impeded or distorted by anything that happens during their participation in the process of education but are in fact widened to allow them to achieve the whole scope of their potential.

Leading by example we teach children to respect themselves and each other as unique and equally valuable members of God's universal family.

It is important to note that equal access does not necessarily lead to equality of outcome. We are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, gender, disability, faith or religion or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in school life. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment which champions respect for all.

The governors and staff of the Sacred Heart School are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities for all and as a Catholic School we believe that the recognition and celebration of the worth of each individual lies at the heart of our aims and values.

We believe that each child is unique and is of equal worth whatever their ability, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or social background.

The governors and staff of the Sacred Heart School are concerned with the welfare of all our children, staff and wider community. In this respect, we will ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment. All pupils are given the same opportunities to explore and develop within an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.

At Sacred Heart we welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and we strive to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We understand the principal of the act and the work needed to ensure that those with protected characteristics are not discriminated against and are given equality of opportunity. Protected characteristics make up the part of a person's identity that makes them who they are; such aspects or characteristics are protected from discrimination. Everyone in Britain is protected from unlawful behaviour by the Act.

The protected characteristics are as follows:

1. age
2. disability
3. race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
4. gender reassignment
5. maternity and pregnancy
6. religion and belief - this includes non-belief
7. sex (also frequently referred to as gender)
8. sexual orientation
9. It also refers to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities which is further demonstrated through School Ethos. We recognise that the overall ethos and climate of the school contributes to what our children learn from us in school; that children pick up on the values and expectations we promote. Children learn as much from the subtle 'little things' that go on, all the hidden messages that are so powerful – as in their formal lessons. Consequently, we use our school ethos as a means to promote equality and self-worth. Through the taught curriculum, the wide range of extra-curricular activities, assemblies, liturgies and the modelling of appropriate relationships

- We promote the spiritual, moral, social, mental and physical development of all pupils at the School
- We encourage all pupils to take part in and develop their talents through the range of opportunities and responsibilities available to them whilst attending the School thus preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and future experiences they will meet in the next stage of their education
- We promote and reward tolerance and respect for each other and establish clear guidelines for expected good behaviour
- We provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which is available to all children regardless of sex, race, religion, ability or background, and ensure all pupils have equal access to the resources available to the school.
- We celebrate diversity and foster an open minded and respectful attitude to the cultures and customs of different societies and believers
- We promote British Values

We will endeavour to create and maintain a school ethos which is welcoming, reflective of the diverse needs around us, fosters a sense of well-being, confidence and security; that affirms individual identity and demonstrates respect for each other; that ensures time and space for each individual; that challenges and expands horizons and encourages confidence, independence, co-operation and participation.

In order to achieve this, we will:

- Always challenge, in an open and frank manner, behaviour and language which threaten the promotion of equal opportunities and take time to discuss with children the negative and damaging effect it has.
- Take the opportunity to promote issues of equality, and self-esteem e.g. in class and assemblies. • Implement praise, reward and constructive feedback with due consideration for equality.
- Encourage a climate of openness where children feel safe and confident to raise issues of concern to them, bullying, racism, e – safety, taunting etc., and where the school can place a positive influence on discussion and events.

- Be sensitive to the needs of all individuals without placing labels on individuals or groups of children. This includes a commitment to offer time to each individual and ensure that individual or group needs are met.
- Be aware of the power of language as a tool which can promote equality or perpetuate inequality.
- Children, too, need to be made aware of their language use and its implications. In addition, they also need to be made aware of their part in promoting positive relationships and the ethos of the school.
- Encourage high aspirations and a skill set for a global citizenship by offering a range of opportunities and experiences to broaden and raise personal expectations as much as possible.

What the child brings from home is important. In promoting equality of opportunity, we may be asking children to explore some of these values, attitudes and behaviours. We would ask our parents to support this.

Resources and Materials

The provision of good quality resources and materials within the school is a high priority.

These resources should:

- Reflect a variety of viewpoints
 - Show positive images of males and females in society, including people with disabilities
- Reflect non-stereotypical images of all groups in a global context
- Include materials to raise awareness of equal opportunity issues
- Be equally accessible to all members of the school community

Care will be taken with the purchase of new material to ensure resources promote positive images and avoid stereotyping. Please be aware that books which display sexism, negative images or stereotyping may have a planned place in our curriculum as a tool for discussion with the children in order to promote a positive understanding of the surrounding issues. Resources, including books, need to be presented as sources of evidence, which need to be interpreted, questioned and evaluated, rather than authorities which are hardened statements of fact.

Organisation of Learning

When organising groups for various activities, consideration is always given to the composition of the group to provide a balance appropriate to the activity.

Staff ensure that:

- The class teacher ensures that all pupils are treated fairly, equally and with respect. We do not discriminate against any child.
- When selecting classroom material, teachers' pay due regard to the sensitivities of all members of the class and do not provide material that is racist or sexist in nature. Teachers strive to provide material that gives positive images of ethnic minorities and that challenges stereotypical images of minority groups.
- When designing schemes of work, we use this policy to guide us, both in our choice of topics to study, and in how to approach sensitive issues.

Largely as a result of the rural nature of the area, our school community does not tend to be very culturally diverse, so we ensure that the learning environment reflects a range and diversity of cultures. This includes links with other communities, instruction in a range of religions and their associated

festivals and celebrations, and theme days introducing the children to languages, music and food from other countries. We are aware that prejudice and stereotyping is caused by low self-image and ignorance. Through positive educational experiences and support for each individual's point of view, we aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all.

All pupils are encouraged to have a voice and have their ideas valued – this is encouraged through careful planning of lessons/learning and opportunities to share thoughts and ideas, for example Pupils Voice groups and regular meetings of the Student Council.

Language

We recognise at our school that it is important that members of the school community use appropriate language which:

- does not offend, transmit or confirm stereotypes
- creates the conditions for all people to develop their self-esteem
- uses correct terminology when referring to groups or individuals e.g. Inuit rather than Eskimo, Native Americans rather than Red Indians.

We undertake to make appropriate provision for all bilingual groups to ensure access to the whole curriculum. These groups may include traveller children, people whose home language is not a standard form of English, pupils for whom English is not their first language.

All our teachers challenge any incidents of prejudice or racism. We draw any serious concerns to the attention of the headteacher.

Teachers support the work of ancillary or support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any occurrence of discrimination.

Extra-curricular provision

It is the policy of this school to provide equal access to all activities from an early age e.g. girls playing football, boys playing netball and mixed teams wherever possible. We undertake responsibility for making contributors to extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports helpers and any non-staff members who have contact with the children) aware of the school's commitment to equal opportunity.

Staffing and Staff Development

In all staff appointments the best candidate will be appointed based on strict professional criteria. We undertake to encourage the career development and aspirations of all staff. It is our policy to provide staff with training and development, which will increase awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils. We recognise the need for positive role models and distribution of responsibility among staff. Wherever possible, this should include access to a balance of male and female staff.

Harassment and bullying

It is the duty of this school to challenge all types of discriminatory behaviour especially unwanted attentions (verbal or physical) and unwelcome or offensive remarks or suggestions about another persons' appearance, character, race, disability or ability, sexuality or gender.

The school has agreed procedures for dealing with incidents such as these (see Behaviour policy, Anti-bullying policy and Complaints policy and procedure).

Awareness of the policy

Parents and pupils should know that the school has an equal opportunities policy and that it is committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

We depend on parents working in partnership with the staff and governors to model and promote the values outlined in this policy and will seek their support promptly to challenge any form of discrimination or prejudice should it arise within the pupil community. We will challenge any instances of discriminatory behaviour, whether reported or witnessed at first hand.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of our School Leadership Team to monitor the effectiveness of this Equal Opportunities policy by:

- monitoring the progress of pupils of minority groups and comparing it to the progress made by other pupils in the school;
- ensure that arrangements are made at the school for the admission of pupils with disabilities, including access to the school and equal opportunities of learning.
- monitoring the participation of pupils of minority groups in extra-curricular activities.
- monitoring the staff appointment process, so that no-one applying for a post at this school is discriminated against;
- taking into serious consideration any complaints regarding equal opportunity issues from parents, staff or pupils;
- monitoring the school exclusions policy, so those pupils from minority groups are not unfairly treated.

Legislation

We are bound by the legal requirements of the following legislation:

5 Human Rights Act 1998 This contains a clear statement of everyone's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 This strengthened the right of children with special educational needs to a place in a mainstream school.

The Equality Act 2010 The Equality Act 2010 has replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with it. It also strengthens the law to help tackle discrimination and inequality. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. A key measure in the Act – the public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5th April 2011. The Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. A significant piece of terminology is 'protected characteristics'.