

Willingdon Community School

Equality Policy

December 2014 (data updated December 2015)



Why we have developed this Equality Policy

This Equality policy for *Willingdon Community School* brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously for Race, Gender and Disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our school's physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. Our school embraces the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Over recent years, schools have (in line with other institutions and public bodies) been working towards an improved understanding of the diverse nature of their communities, and recognising their role in promoting an understanding of equality for different groups of people. Much of this work is in response to legislation that places an increased duty on schools and other settings, but it also sits within the specific context of a school's role in providing learning and opportunities for all - it is about fairness, rights and justice.

Equality legislation exists to protect people but also to try and advance equality. Inequality still persists in the UK despite 40 years of equality legislation. In East Sussex we know that some groups do less well than their peers in terms of progress, achievement and later life chances. This picture is reflected nationally. Recognition of diversity and the promotion of inclusive and equality practices will help to overcome this disparity.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and streamlines legislation that has come before it. The Act refers to protected characteristics:

- *Age (for staff only)*
- *Disability*
- *Gender, including transgender*
- *Pregnancy and maternity*
- *Race*
- *Religion or belief*
- *Sexual orientation*

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public bodies including maintained schools and Academies.

Our equality policy is inclusive of our whole school community – students, staff, parents/carers and visitors - who have been involved in and contributed to its development. It explains how we aim to listen to and involve pupils, staff, parents and the community in achieving better outcomes for our children and young people.

Our school within the wider context

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation. Data from RAISEonline 2015 shows:

- 93.2% of the school population ascribe themselves as *White British*. This compares to a national figure of 71.3%.
- Only 1.2% of the school population ascribe *Gypsy Roma Traveller* status to themselves.
- The home language is English in 97.5% of homes.
- Only 17.4% of the school are, or have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years. This compares to a national figure of 28.7%.
- There are currently only 2 children looked after by the local authority.
- 2.8% of students on the school roll carry *Statements of SEN or Education, Health and Care plans*. 3 of these Statements/EHCPs are for students supported by our ESCC lead Sensory Needs Facility.

The data tells us that the school community is a fairly homogeneous one and we must ensure that small, minority groups are not marginalised. An example of this is that nationally, the attainment gap is often wider in schools that have small numbers of children eligible for free school meals.

Overall aims of our Equality Policy

- *To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.*
- *To promote equality of access and opportunity within our school and within our wider community.*
- *To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins & sexual orientation.*

To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the Equality Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing, and material outcomes¹.

Issues relating to adults within the school community can be embraced under these themes and reflected in the equality objectives.

Our approach

We seek to embed equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all members of our school community, within all aspects of school life.

We actively seek out opportunities to embrace the following key concepts:

¹ <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

- Shared Humanity. Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. We value our fundamental similarities and universality
- Valuing difference and diversity. We appreciate the richness within our differences and look for ways of celebrating and understanding them better
- Interdependence, interaction and influence. We recognise that, as they evolve, distinct cultures, beliefs and lifestyles will impact on and inform each other
- Social cohesion within our school and within our local community
- Excellence. We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our community, the UK and the wider world. Excellence is to be found everywhere
- Personal and cultural identity. We will provide opportunities to explore and value the complexity of our personal and cultural identities
- Fairness and social justice. We will develop our understanding of the inequality that exists in society and explore ways of individually and collectively promoting a more equitable society

Our vision statement about Equality

Willingdon Community School seeks to foster warm, welcoming and respectful environments, which allow us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

We recognise that there are similarities and differences between individuals and groups but we will strive to ensure that our differences do not become barriers to participation, access and learning and to create inclusive processes and practices, where the varying needs of individuals and groups are identified and met. We therefore cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

We will build on our similarities and seek enrichment from our differences and so promote understanding and learning between and towards others to create cohesive communities.

Our duties

We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and have sought to involve the whole school community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all²

They are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child³.

We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of school life.

² See *Appendix A* for further information about legislation

³ <http://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Rights-Respecting-Schools-Award/Childrens-rights/>

These opportunities are likely to include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities.

- learning and teaching and the planned curriculum
- the engagement, participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies
- preparation for entry to the school
- school policies
- breaks and lunchtimes
- the provision of school meals
- interaction with peers
- opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- exam arrangements
- behaviour management approach and sanctions
- exclusion procedures
- school clubs, activities and school trips
- the school's arrangements for working with other agencies
- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- grouping of pupils
- homework
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school or Theatre in Education (TIE)
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare.

The roles and responsibilities within our school community

Our Headteacher will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students and visitors are informed about the Equality Policy
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and report to the Governing Body on the effectiveness of the policy
- ensure that the senior leadership team (SLT) is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it.

Our governing body will:

- designate a governor with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy
- ensure that the action plans are monitored through a relevant sub-committee
- support the headteacher in implementing any actions necessary
- engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- evaluate and review the policy.

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this policy
- provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the policy
- with the Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
- assist in implementing reviews of this policy.

Our pupils/students will:

- be involved in the ongoing development of the policy and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
- be expected to act in accordance with the policy.

Our parents/carers will:

- be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the ongoing development of the policy
- have access to the policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
- be encouraged to actively support the policy
- be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the policy
- be informed of any incident related to this policy which could directly affect their child.

Our school staff will:

- be involved in the ongoing development of the policy
- be fully aware of the Equality Policy and how it relates to them
- understand that this is a whole school issue and support the Equality Policy
- make known any queries or training requirements.

How we developed our policy

The development of this policy has involved the whole of our school community. We've discussed it with them and listened to what they have to say, including:

Students

- The views of students were canvassed through the school council
- They will have further opportunity to review aspects of the policy through council meetings
- Diversity is studied in a number of curriculum areas

Staff

- All staff took part in equalities training (Sep. 2010) which included opportunity to comment on the draft equalities policy
- The amended December 2014 policy will be made available to staff for comment

Governors

- The policy will be reviewed by the *Personal Development and Well-Being* sub-committee

Parents/carers

- The views of parents/carers were canvassed during a parent forum and comments are invited via the school website

Minority, marginalised and potentially vulnerable groups

- Copies of the policy will be produced in each of the home languages represented in the school as required.
- The school will produce all, or aspects of, the policy as a podcast, in Braille or signed in BSL if required.

A full copy will remain live on the school website with an option to forward comments to Mel Brown (Assistant Headteacher).

How we developed our Policy - Using information

We have used data and other information about our school, and Equality Impact assessments (EQIAs) as a common sense measure to determine the effects of a policy, practice or project on different groups. EQIAs help us to analyse whether what we are planning potentially has a differential impact on one or more particular group (either positively or negatively). They help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. They help to ensure we meet the diverse needs of our pupils/students and staff and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school life.

In addition, we know our school well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this.

OfSTED inspectors visit us regularly and report on equality issues during our inspection. We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, disability and gender. Our action plan directly reflects this consultation.

We also value more qualitative information which may be given to us through student voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously.

We make use of:

- Parental Survey that is available on the website
- In-house student voice activities such as the transition questionnaire, student council discussions and focused student voice activities undertaken as part of our ongoing curriculum review process; for example, the views of FSM students were canvassed as an important part of a wider Ever 6 achievement review
- Governor Scrutiny

The local authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

We have established good links with our local and our wider community. We welcome them into our school. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school.

By listening to those within our community and to our partners, we are able to identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches and focus our energy where it is required.

This community team comprises of:

- Social Services
- Targeted Youth Support
- CAMHS
- Educational Psychology Service
- Family Key Working Service
- Youth Justice
- Sussex Police
- School Nursing Service
- Educational Support, Behaviour and Attendance Support Service (ESBAS)
- Flexible Education Support Service (FLESS)
- Traveller Education & English as an Additional Language Service (TEALS)
- Willingdon, Wannock and Jevington Parish Council
- Polegate Town Council
- Polegate and Willingdon Schools Partnership
- Encounter (Local Christian churches' youth outreach)

Within the school there is a facility for students with profound sensory needs. The Sensory Needs Facility is funded by the local authority's Service for Children with Sensory Needs (SCSN). All students accessing the support of the facility have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. These students are integrated into mainstream classes, with varying levels of support and use their preferred mode of communication, be it a Total Communication (TC) approach (through signing and lip reading), British Sign Language or lip reading and braille. Hearing students have the opportunity to learn and gain a qualification in British Sign Language (BSL). Students with sensory needs enjoy an inclusive education and those with additional learning or communication difficulties benefit from support from the Sensory Needs Facility to differentiate work as required.

Commissioned services

Increasingly we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. We work closely with the local authority on procurement – buying in services - to ensure that equality issues are given full regard. When buying goods and services from external suppliers, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community?

- If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?

We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

Further information about procurement can be found on ESCC intranet (CZONE)

Our Staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) from discrimination based on the protected characteristics. With regard to disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled.

This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes) and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society. In accordance with the Equality Act we do not enquire about the health of an applicant until a job offer has been made⁴ or require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure.

We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and take seriously and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.

We interpret our duties positively and take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment. An example of this would be that we have made substantial modification of the school building in order to provide for profoundly visually and hearing impaired students.

Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying

We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice –based bullying behaviour is driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes or misinformation. These are then directed against an individual or group, based on difference (real or perceived), and linked to, for example, racism, homophobia, transphobia, negative views of disabled people or faith groups or sexism. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

We recognise that we as individuals and society often struggle with difference of any kind (perceived or actual), which can result in seizing upon the most visible sign of difference e.g. skin colour or disability.

⁴ Unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work - for example ensuring that applicants for a PE teaching post have the physical capability to carry out the duties.

Through our school ethos and curriculum, we want our pupils/students to understand better the diversity that exists in society. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore the subtleties and complexities in order to prevent and respond to incidents and situations. We will address the experience, understanding and needs of the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders and the wider school community through our actions and responses.

We will record all hate incidents and prejudice based bullying. We will use this information to identify trends and patterns, so that we have approaches in place to provide appropriate responses in terms of support for victims and their families, sanctions and support for perpetrators and their families and education for our children, young people and communities.

We expect students and staff alike to take an active stand against all forms of discrimination and always to report it:

- To any teacher
- To the form tutor
- To a member of the senior leadership team
- To a line manager
- To a school prefect

All incidents of a racial nature are logged and dealt with as they occur and reported to ESCC termly. Regular monitoring of bullying takes place through the Personal Development and Well Being governors sub-committee and our school bullying policy was last reviewed in November 2014.

Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

This policy will be actively promoted and disseminated through our website, parent forums and the school council.

Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our governors who have agreed and published this policy which sets out our priorities and supports these with specific and measurable objectives.

Equality Objectives

Using the views of a variety of stakeholders we have set ourselves specific and measurable objectives that will help us achieve the aims of the general equality duty. Reviewed every 3 years, the Equality Objectives 2014-17 are available in a separate document.

Should you wish to comment on anything contained in the policy or objectives, please do not hesitate to contact Mel Brown, Assistant Headteacher.

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