



Victoria School

Equality Act

Protected characteristics

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Equality Policy for Victoria School

The Equality Act (2010) redefines Equality by bringing together all existing legislation on Equality into a single act. The Equality Act introduced the concept of a Protected Characteristic. This replaces the Equality Strands of previous legislation, by giving legal protection from discrimination on the grounds of the following sets of characteristics:

- Gender
- Marital status and civil partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Transgender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation

Additional responsibilities for public bodies are set out in section 149 of the Equality Act. This places a **general duty** on public bodies when exercising their functions to pay due regard to equality and to meet the three aims of the Equality Act which are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Equality Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

In addition there are **two specific duties** within the Public Sector Equality Duty which schools must fulfil. These are to:

- Publish annual information to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- Publish Equality objectives and review them annually

What if we already have separate policies on race, disability and gender? Do we need to re-write them?

Not necessarily, though you will need to check them to see if they are up to date with changes in the Equality Act. It may be that you need to refresh your existing policies by revisiting your key priorities and action plan and this template may help you to do this. The Equality Policy does not replace Special Educational Needs or Accessibility or other related policies.

Equality Statement

'Achievement for all, be the best we can be in all that we do' is our motto and we are committed to ensuring that every pupil in our school achieves their best.

This Equality Policy is intended to respond to the spirit as well as the letter of the Equality Act (2010). The policy recognises that our school has a duty to remove discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, by integrating equality into the school's core priorities and functions.

This Equality Policy will inform our School Development Plan as this will enable us to:

- Demonstrate how promoting equality and eliminating discrimination can help raise standards
- Ensure that equality and diversity are part of the school's core business both as a school and as an employer
- Ensure that our priorities for raising standards support our equality objectives

To ensure success and meet the Public Sector Equality Duty the school will:

- Publish annual information to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Publish Equality objectives and review them annually

What do we mean by Equality and Diversity?

Equality refers to outcomes, making sure that all social groups benefit equally from our activities. Diversity recognises that we can only achieve equality by taking into account the different needs of the population. Equality is impossible to achieve without recognising diversity.

What do we mean by a Protected Characteristic?

The Equality Act (2010) introduced the concept of a Protected Characteristic. This is an aspect, or characteristic, of a person's identity that is protected from discrimination. The concept recognises that we are all individual, however that our individuality is made up of characteristics we share with others. The following are the nine Protected Characteristics recognised by the Equality Act:

- Gender
- Marital status and civil partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Transgender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is a type of negative treatment that affects a whole group of people who share a Protected Characteristic, or an individual because they belong to a group. In the Equality Act this is called a Protected Characteristic. Discrimination is shaped by social assumptions that feed into:

- The way people behave towards each other
- The way in which institutions operate

Discrimination gives rise to long term patterns of inequality in terms of:

- Educational attainment
- Employment opportunities
- Distribution of wealth and resources
- Health
- Involvement in the criminal justice system

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated less favourable than others because of their (real or perceived) ethnicity, disability, age, sexuality, religion/belief or gender.

Indirect discrimination is when there are rules or procedures that have the effect of discriminating against certain groups of people.

- This policy applies to staff, governors, pupils, parents/carers & visitors.
- This policy also applies to all activities which take place before, during and after school on the school premises.
- School makes an effort to listen to staff, pupils, parents and other school users when developing the Equality Policy and action plan
- The policy is available on the school's website, or printed copies can be provided on request.
- The Headteacher and governors have the responsibility of monitoring this policy. The policy will be reported on through Headteacher's reports to show progress and impact.

Ethnicity Equality Policy

What are the key Race Equality issues for our school?

We have a number of children from different ethnic backgrounds.

What is our school's performance on Ethnicity and attainment?

Our EAL pupils tend to perform in line with or above the national average.

What steps has our school taken to address racial incidents and racist bullying?

All accidents and incidents are recorded on CPOMS and the accident book or the blue incident book.

What impact have we already had on race equality in our school?

- The school curriculum routinely covers topics to address race equality including an annual multi-cultural week and cultural events.
- The school equips pupils to live in a diverse and multi-ethnic Britain through the curriculum, through residential and day visits, through communication via email and letters to other schools locally, nationally and internationally.
- The school welcomes visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds and tries to ensure they are not reinforcing stereotypes.
- The school attempts to embed an anti-racist ethos throughout the school.
- The school has made use of some aspects of Philosophy 4 Children and building learning power to encourage a deeper understanding of respect for each other. We use a program called 'Human Values' to teach love, trust, respect, love, peace and non-violence.
- The school support pupils who have English as an additional language with planned interventions depending on their academic and social needs.

Disability Equality Policy

Social and medical models of disability

One of our key goals is to challenge the view that the inequality faced by disabled people is down to their medical 'problems'.

The medical model has fed negative stereotypes held by non-disabled people such as:

- Focusing only on what a person cannot do.
- Making assumptions about what is best for the disabled person.
- Thinking that disabled people lack intelligence.
- Feeling embarrassed among disabled people.
- Bullying and harassing disabled people.



The social model focuses on the social environment and how it causes some people to be disabled:



What is a disability and how many disabled people are there in the UK?

Disability is any condition that affects a person in their day to day life. This can happen suddenly, for example as a result of an accident, or gradually as a result of a condition such as arthritis.

In the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) this is called an impairment. The DDA now recognises around 400 impairments including:

- Mobility impairments (requiring aids such as sticks or wheelchairs to move about).
- Sensory impairments (hearing or sight loss).
- Mental ill health (including depression, stress, Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia).

- Cognitive developmental impairments (including learning disabilities, dyslexia, and autism).
- Muscular impairments (including spinal injuries).
- Asthma
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Phobias
- Arthritis
- Acquired brain injuries.

Reasonable adjustments

The school is required to improve access to the curriculum, our buildings and our other services to disabled people. This also means that we need to take a proactive stance and anticipate what we may need in the future for disabled users.

The school's Accessibility Plan attempts to ensure that possible future needs are taken into account and considered whenever modifications to the building are taking place.

Recruitment and Retention of disabled staff

Our school welcomes a diverse workforce and we wish for an ethos where potential and existing staff feel able to disclose any impairment that they have. This is not just for data collection purposes, but in order for the school to make any reasonable adjustments for this member of staff. All disclosures will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Disability and special educational needs

Not all pupils who are defined as disabled will have special educational needs. For example, those with severe asthma or diabetes may not have SEN but may have rights under the DDA. Similarly, not all children with SEN will be defined as having a disability.

What are the key issues for our school?

We have a number of pupils who need additional support for medical or educational support. This needs are catered for through their Educational Health Care plan.

What is your school's performance on Disability and attainment?

Those pupils with any disability currently perform in line with other pupils and make good progress.

What steps has the school taken to address incidents bullying against disabled people or that promote stigma about disability?

Analysis of our accident system shows that there have been no incidents related to disability. Any which do occur would be investigate thoroughly and action taken.

What impact have we already had on disability equality in our school?

Pupils who have attended the school and who were in a wheelchair were included in all aspects of school life including trips out of school.

Gender Equality Policy

What is gender?

Gender refers to the social construction of female and male identity, rather than biological differences between men and women. It includes the ways in which those differences, whether real or perceived, have been valued and used to classify women and men and to assign roles and expectations to them. Gender identity is not always fixed and the Gender Equality Duty urges us to have due regard to the needs of transgender people.

Gender has a major influence on the ways in which boys and girls perceive themselves in terms of their identities, their aspirations for their future, and their expectations about how people should treat them. In Cumbria there are a number of persistent gender inequalities which could be influenced positively by a school adopting a conscious Gender Equality policy. These include:

- Attitudes towards domestic and sexual violence.
- Reduction of gender segregation in employment
- Reduction of gender gaps in attainment and reduction of gender preferences for specific subjects.
- Development of healthy lifestyles that prevent future health risks that males and females are likely to suffer from in later life.

What are the key issues for our school?

The attainment gender gap between girls and boys is being addressed through the curriculum provision to ensure that it is diminished.

What is your school's performance on Gender and attainment?

Gender attainment can differ from year to year however the analysis of data allows us to review the outcomes and plan for the changes in attainment.

Pupil premium: attainment of different genders is an area of focus and this is linked to attendance, safeguarding or early help.

What impact have we already had on gender equality in our school?

The following were highlighted in *the gender equality duty and schools* as key issues for education:

- The school tracks the progress of different groups more able pupil premium, pupil premium, ever 6, boys, girls and SEND pupils.

- The school encourages boys and girls to take part in different sports and clubs during and after-school including choir, cookery club, dance and gymnastics, homework, multi skills and fun and games.

- Boys and girls are encouraged to develop a diversity of role models.

Sexual Orientation Equality Policy (Including Transgender)

Approximately 3% of the population are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. In Cumbria this is about 15,000 people. Developing an inclusive approach to understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment is critical to achieving Equality. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young people have the same needs as all other young people - they want to feel safe, included and are able to fulfill their potential. The whole school should be involved in creating an atmosphere where everyone feels they can be themselves.

Homophobic bullying

Stonewall's 2007 research [The School Report](#) found that almost two thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying in Britain's schools and 98 per cent hear phrases like 'That's so gay' or 'You're so gay'. School staff should also be aware of the consequences and what they can do. Stonewall's guide on [Challenging homophobic language](#) and [guidance](#)

Lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in the curriculum

The most effective way to prevent homophobic bullying and to ensure Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young feel included and have the information they need to stay safe, is making the curriculum inclusive of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual issues.

Stonewall's 2009 report [The Teachers' Report](#) found that more than nine in ten secondary school teachers say Lesbian and Gay issues should be addressed in schools.

What are the key issues for our school?

Children rarely but some do make comments about things or others being 'gay'. This is always something that they have heard from older children and they do not always have the level of development to understand. It is increasingly becoming a topic of conversation with some of our children. If the matter did arise then it is addressed through Kid safe lessons or personal discussions.

What steps has the school taken to address homophobic bullying or language and behaviour to reduce homophobia in society?

Circle times, assemblies, human values curriculum, the curriculum are all used to allow the pupils opportunities to discuss different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and on line safety. Online safety from Early Years to Y6 is built into the curriculum planning.

What impact have we already had on addressing Sexual Orientation and Equality in our school?

- Through sensitive discussions when required, the school endeavours to equip pupils to live in a society that recognises same sex relationships on an equal basis as opposite sex relationships.
- The school is making use of human values programme to develop skills in equality.

- The RSE for all primary schools will be followed.

Age Equality Policy

The Equality Act protects people from unfair treatment on the grounds of age. In terms of the school population, the Equality Act recognises that people aged below 16 can be treated differently and the Act is aimed at unfair treatment that is not justified by the policies of the school. This has particular application to staff employment policies.

There may be cases where a pupil's prime carers are teenagers, young adults, or grand parents, and that age equality can apply to norms and expectations that parents fit a standardised age group.

What are the key issues for our school?

A number of our pupils have parents who became parents as young teenagers.

What impact have we already had on age equality in our school?

- CPD opportunities are available to all staff, regardless of their career stage
- Staff are trained in Kidsafe.
- Dedicated safeguarding officers to help with support for parents.

Religion/Belief Equality Policy

The Equality Act recognises that Religion and Belief as a Protected Characteristic. Whether a school is denominational or not, every school is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty in terms of its treatment of pupils, families and staff.

All policies need to ensure that they do not treat any person unfairly on the grounds of their Religion and Belief, and that where a person belongs to a religious minority, their faith is taken into account.

The policy also needs to treat atheists and agnostics on an equal footing to people who profess a faith. Also schools need to consider faith in relation to the curriculum.

What are the key issues for our school?

The school is not a church school but has duties laid down by the DfE.

- Religion and Belief are addressed in a balanced manner in discussions across the planned curriculum.

- Wall charts of faiths & other teaching aids are used to promote awareness of the world's main faith groups.
- Alternatives to religion are given fair treatment in the course of class discussions and assemblies.
- In RE, specific religions are taught in such a way that pupils learn 'What it might be like to be Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist etc and the day-to-day life of faith groups, not just the festivals.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The Equality Act recognises that Pregnancy and Maternity is a Protected Characteristic. Every school is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty in terms of its treatment of pupils, families and staff. It is important to ensure that all policies do not treat any person unfairly who is pregnant or who has recently given birth and that the person is not discriminated on those grounds.

In the case of a school, no pupil will be discriminated against purely on the grounds of pregnancy. Up to 18 calendar weeks authorised absence period may be given immediately before and after the birth in order to ensure that the student is reintegrated into education as quickly as possible.

Female members of staff are already covered under existing employment legislation.

Good Relations Policy

This has now been incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Act as a Duty to Foster Good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and people who do not.

What is meant by good relations?

Good relations between people from different backgrounds exist when:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
- The diversity of backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued
- Similar life opportunities are available to all
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in schools and our communities
- There is a coherent and robust policy on all types of bullying, along with specific measures to address bullying related to identity.

Schools and their communities

Good community relationships have to be owned by all organisations and community groups if it is to be effective. Schools belong to many different communities. Our school's communities include:

- the *school community* – our pupils, their families, school staff, school governors, users of the school's facilities
- the *local community* – our school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in the area
- the *UK community* – we are by definition part of this
- the *global community* – formed by EU and international links

Our school works in partnership with other schools locally, nationally and internationally.

What are the key issues for our school?

Ensuring our pupils and parents have an increasing understanding of the diverse nature of multi-ethnic Britain and the wider world.

What impact have we already had on community cohesion in our school?

Teaching, learning and curriculum

- Promoting shared values
- Building pupils' understanding of their own identity and the diversity around them
- Having high expectations of all pupils
- Skilling pupils to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping

- Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language
- Assemblies
- Involving members from local communities
- Global citizenship in the curriculum
- Fieldwork visits
- Use of Philosophy for Children
- Teaching British Values through our human values program: see separate document on website.

Equity and excellence

- Analysing assessment results to identify performance of different groups
- Tackling underperformance by any particular group
- Removing barriers to access to the school for all groups

- Behaviour policies
- Bullying policies
- Admission policies
- Data analysis and intervention to address underachieving groups

Engagement with extended services

- Building positive relations with different groups
- Building meaningful partnerships with the local authority, parents, local community groups and voluntary groups

- Linking with other schools, nationally and internationally

