

# St Thomas' CE Primary School

## Equality information and objectives & accessibility plan

### September 2015

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 We do not discriminate against staff or pupils on the grounds of their gender, disability, race, religion or belief, nationality, ethnicity or national origins, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity. This is in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty from the Equality Act 2010 and covers both direct and indirect discrimination.
- 1.2 We promote the principles of fairness and justice for all through the education that we provide in our school.
- 1.3 We work to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities provided by the school.
- 1.4 We constantly strive to remove any forms of indirect discrimination that may form barriers to learning.
- 1.5 We ensure that all recruitment, employment, promotion and training systems are fair to all, and provide opportunities for everyone to achieve.
- 1.6 We challenge stereotyping and prejudice whenever it occurs.
- 1.7 We celebrate the cultural diversity of our community and foster good relationships between people of different groups.
- 1.8 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.

#### 2 Aims and objectives

In our school we aim to tackle discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations across all aspects of school life. We do this by:

- Creating an ethos in which pupils and staff feel valued and secure;
- Building self-esteem and confidence in our pupils, so that they can then use these qualities to influence their own relationships with others;
- Having consistent expectations of pupils and their learning;
- Removing or minimizing barriers to learning, so that all pupils can achieve;
- Ensuring that our teaching takes into account the learning needs of all pupils through our schemes of work and lesson planning;
- Actively tackling discrimination and promoting racial equality through our School Website, collective worship, newsletters to parents and displays of work;
- Regular consultation with parents/carers and members of the local community, so that they are well informed of our policy and procedures;
- Making clear to our pupils what constitutes aggressive and prejudiced behaviour;
- Identifying clear procedures for dealing quickly with incidents of prejudiced behaviour;
- Making pupils and staff confident to challenge prejudiced and aggressive behaviour.

#### 3 The role of adults in tackling discrimination

- 3.1 We do not tolerate any forms of discriminatory behaviour including direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Should an incident occur, we will act immediately to prevent

any repetition of the incident and do all we can to support that person in overcoming any difficulties they may have. Incidents should be logged in the incident file which is kept in the learning mentor's office. Incidents could take the form of physical assault, verbal abuse, damage to a pupil's property or lack of cooperation in a lesson. Any adult witnessing an incident or being informed about an incident must follow these agreed procedures:

- Stop the incident and comfort the pupil who is the victim
- Reprimand the aggressor and inform the victim what action has been taken
- If the incident is witnessed by other pupils, tell them why it is wrong
- Report the incident to the learning mentor, head teacher or deputy head teacher and inform him/her of the action taken. This should be logged in the Incident File (kept in the deputy head's office)
- Inform the class teacher(s) of both the victim and the aggressor.
- Inform both sets of parents, as appropriate.

3.2 We endeavour to make our school welcoming to all groups. We promote an understanding of different cultures, views & beliefs through the themes studied by the children and reflect this in the displays of work shown around the school.

3.3 Our curriculum reflects the attitudes, values and respect that we have for all groups. We ensure that children have opportunities to study a variety of cultures, religions and ways of life.

## 4 The role of governors

4.1 The governing body has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this policy statement, and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that all members of the school community are treated fairly and with equality.

4.2 Recruitment & employment:

- The governing body seeks to ensure that all groups will not be discriminated against when applying for jobs at our school.
- The governors take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school environment gives access to people with disabilities.
- Employment exceptions for schools with religious character:
  - ✓ Voluntary Aided schools may apply religious criteria when recruiting or dismissing any member of their teaching staff. In recruitment, remuneration and promotion they may give preference to persons:
    - whose religious opinions are in accordance with the tenets of the religion of the school
    - who attend religious worship in accordance with those tenets; or
    - who give, or are willing to give, religious education in accordance with those tenets.
- ✓ In considering dismissals, the governing body may have regard to any conduct that is incompatible with the precepts, or with the upholding of the tenets, of the religion of the school.
- ✓ *Non-teaching staff* - Religious criteria may not be applied to any other posts in a VA school unless there is a genuine occupational requirement. This would need to be justified but might, for example, apply to a member of staff required to give pastoral care to pupils.

4.3 The governors welcome all applications to join the school, whatever background or disability a child may have.

- 4.4 The governing body ensures that no child in our school is discriminated against. All children have access to the full range of the curriculum and regulations regarding school uniform will be applied equally to boys and girls. If a child's religion or disability affects the school uniform, then the school will deal with each case sensitively and with respect for the child's cultural traditions or physical needs.

## **5 The role of the head teacher**

- 5.1 It is the head teacher's role to implement the school's equal opportunities and anti discrimination policy and she is supported by the governing body in so doing.
- 5.2 It is the head teacher's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the school policy on equal opportunities, and that teachers apply these guidelines fairly in all situations.
- 5.3 The head teacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy, so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities.
- 5.4 The head teacher promotes the principle of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum and promotes respect for other people in all aspects of school life, for example in assemblies and displays shown around the school.
- 5.6 The head teacher will ensure that views on equal opportunities and discrimination by pupils, staff and parents are surveyed on an annual basis. She will take their views into consideration when formulating the School Improvement Plan.
- 5.7 The head teacher regards all incidents of unfair treatment and any discriminatory incidents with due seriousness.

## **6 The role of the class teacher**

- 6.1 The class teacher ensures that all pupils are treated fairly, equally and with respect. We do not discriminate against any child.
- 6.2 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, disabilities & religions and that challenges stereotypical images of minority groups.
- 6.3 When designing schemes of work, we use this policy to guide us in our choice of themes to study, and in how to approach sensitive issues.
- 6.4 All our teachers challenge any incidents of prejudice. We record any serious incidents in the Incident Log (which includes racist, homophobic and bullying incidents), and draw them to the attention of the head teacher or deputy head teacher. The Incident Log is kept in the Learning Mentor's room. Teachers support the work of support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any occurrence of discrimination.

## **7 Monitoring and review**

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of our governing body to monitor the effectiveness of this Equal Opportunities policy. The governing body does this by:

- monitoring the progress of pupils of minority groups and comparing it to the progress made by other pupils in the school;
- monitoring the staff appointment process, so that no one applying for a post at this school is discriminated against;
- requiring the headteacher to report to governors on an annual basis on the effectiveness of this policy;
- taking into serious consideration any complaints regarding equal opportunity issues from parents, staff or pupils;
- monitoring the school behaviour and exclusions policy, so those pupils from minority groups are not unfairly treated.

Updated by Sarah Bouette – March 2015

## **The Law**

The following section provides short summaries of some relevant legal provisions on equality issues affecting schools. It is not a comprehensive guide to the law, and should be read in conjunction with detailed guidance and Codes of Practice available from the Department for Education and Skills, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and other bodies.

### **Education Reform Act 1988**

All pupils in maintained schools should follow the national curriculum to the maximum extent possible.

### **Education Act 1944/Children Act 1989**

Pupils are entitled to efficient full time education suitable to their ages, abilities, aptitudes and any special educational needs they may have.

### **Education Act 1981 and 1993**

Where a pupil has been assessed as having special educational needs, a statement of needs must be prepared and maintained in accordance with its provisions.

Children with special educational needs require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the National Curriculum. Close partnership with parents and consideration of the wishes of the child are deemed essential to effective assessment and provision for special educational need.

### **Education Act 1993**

Governors in all schools must produce a written policy on sex education. The sexual and reproductive biology covered in National Curriculum science at both primary and secondary levels is mandatory for all pupils. Secondary schools must provide a wider programme of sex education, which must include HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. At primary level, governors must decide whether to provide a programme of sex education which goes beyond the national curriculum. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from sex education where it is outside the national curriculum.

Note: Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 states that an LEA ' shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality'. However the subsequent circular (12/88) from the department of the

Environment states:

' Section 28 does not affect the activities of school governors, nor of teachers. It will not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, nor the counselling of pupils concerned about their sexuality'.

### **Disability Discrimination Act 2003**

It may be unlawful to discriminate against disabled people applying for jobs, or against existing disabled staff. A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Reasonable adjustments (such as the provision of ramps) may be made if premises or employment arrangements substantially disadvantage a disabled person compared with a non-disabled person.

Disabled people are also protected from discrimination in the provision of non-educational services (such as fund-raising events) on school premises.

### **Equal Pay Act 1970**

Women and men are entitled in principle to the same pay and contractual terms if they are carrying out the same or similar work, or work of equal value. 'Pay' is broadly defined and includes, for example, pensions, bonus and performance pay, sick pay and overtime.

### **Human Rights Act 1998**

It may be unlawful for the school to act in a way which infringes the rights and freedoms of a pupil or member of staff under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. An example of a possible infringement might be failure to take action against bullying of a pupil in breach of the prohibition of inhumane and degrading treatment.

### **Race Relations Act 1976**

A school must not treat a person less favourably on racial grounds with regard to admissions, exclusions, access to benefits, facilities or services or the employment of staff. Racial grounds are grounds of race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origin. Discrimination on racial grounds can also be indirect. Indirect discrimination is unlawful unless justified irrespective of racial grounds and can occur when a practice appears neutral, but in fact has a disproportionate adverse impact on those from a certain racial group.

It is unlawful for an educational establishment to discriminate directly or indirectly on racial grounds with regard to:

- admissions
- access to benefits, facilities or services
- exclusions
- the employment of staff

Racial grounds are grounds of race, colour, nationality - including citizenship - or ethnic or national origins. A more precise definition of racial group has been given by the House of Lords, who said that;

- a long shared history, and
- a cultural tradition of its own

were essential characteristics, but that other characteristics were also relevant:

- a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors;

- a common language;
- a common literature;
- a common religion;
- being either a minority or a majority within a larger community

For the purposes of the Race Relations Act, 'gypsies' (Travellers) are defined as a racial group.

### **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**

Schools are required to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

### **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**

A school must not treat a person less favourably on grounds of sex or status as married with regard to admissions, exclusions, access to benefits, facilities or services or the employment of staff. Discrimination on grounds of sex can also be indirect. Indirect discrimination is unlawful unless justified irrespective of grounds of sex and can occur when a practice appears neutral, but in fact has a disproportionate adverse impact on those of one sex.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a boy or a girl on the grounds of sex with regards to:

- admissions
- access to benefits, facilities or services
- exclusions

An exception is made for admissions to single sex schools, though the facilities available at such schools should not be less favourable than those at another schools.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against staff with regard to employment on grounds of sex or marriage.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (in force by 2003)**

A school will be placed under new duties not to treat disabled pupils less favourably than non-disabled pupils and to take reasonable steps to remedy substantial disadvantage to disabled pupils. The Act also affects the law on Special Educational Needs, including strengthening the rights of parents to a mainstream place for their child with SEN.