

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

'Learning together in Faith and Love'

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Equal Opportunities Policy

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Mission Statement

At St. Mary's School we aim to provide all children with a happy and purposeful learning environment which stimulates creativity and provides challenges for all children.

We embrace and celebrate the diverse religions and cultures of the local community and ensure that everyone is treated equally.

We are committed as a team to work together with parents to nurture an atmosphere of mutual respect and we encourage parents to take an active part in their child's learning.

Through creating a safe and secure environment we strive to raise children's self-worth, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and to become independent learners.

Our ultimate aim is for pupils to be happy and confident learners who are excited about the future.

St. Mary's Values- these are the values that underpin all areas of our school community:

- Kindness
- Respect
- Tolerance
- Honesty
- Responsibility (for ourselves and our world)
- Co-operation

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Aims

At St. Mary's we believe that equal opportunity means giving everybody the opportunity to develop their full potential. This means that we aim to challenge any discrimination based upon social divisions of race, class, gender, sexuality, special educational needs or the division of people upon perceived differences of ability or disability. Equal opportunity means overcoming our own stereotypes and prejudices. Fundamentally it is about human rights.

The School's personnel practices, including recruitment, retention and remuneration are carried out in accordance with the LA's Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy.

We operate an open school policy and all governors, parents and other members of the community are encouraged to become involved in all school activities. The school site has been modernised to reduce congestion at the start of the school day and at home time. We have created more exits and developed procedures for safe dismissal of all pupils. These are regularly monitored and adapted when necessary. Our school building has wheelchair and pram access through the ramp and toilet facilities suitable for a wheel chair and through our Health and Safety Policy we endeavour to minimise hazards for the less able bodied by keeping routes through the building clear of obstructions.

The Curriculum

In relation to the curriculum in this school, we share the following guiding principles to advance equal opportunities :

- All pupils must be treated as individuals with their own abilities, difficulties, attitudes, backgrounds and experiences
- We must challenge myths, stereotypes and misconceptions as they arise

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- We must ensure that equal access to the curriculum means real opportunity to benefit all the pupils in our school
- The recognition and valuing of differences helps to achieve equal opportunities

Providing equal opportunities for all pupils means:

- Extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures, languages and faiths
- Valuing cultural diversity by drawing on pupils' backgrounds and experiences
- Offering positive images and role models from all cultures

These dimensions permeate all areas of the curriculum and are the responsibility of all teachers.

Social Processes

To ensure that social processes within the school are effective, the following must be reviewed on a regular basis;

- Pupils appropriately seated in the classroom and there is an effective use of space available
- Attention and time given to different social groups e.g. boys, girls, pupils with learning difficulties, pupils with average attainment, pupils with above average attainment and pupils on free school meals
- The quality of interactions between pupils
- Learning outside the classroom and the procedures for supporting all pupils in the playground as well as on trips or visits
- The distribution of different groups of pupils between different abilities

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- The distribution of different groups of pupils on the Special Educational Needs Register
- The impact of interventions on pupils' social status within their class, eg. Is it having a positive impact on their emotional well-being?

If the numbers are disproportionate in certain groupings, is this to do with low expectations? Is it to do with teachers having no appropriate way of responding to culturally specific behaviour, leading to high levels of confrontation and discipline against certain cultural groups?

These statements are not exhaustive but all staff must frequently examine their practice and that of the school on a regular basis in order to assure that equality is prioritised. This can take place during regular Leadership and Key Stage meetings as well as the other professional meetings with staff and their line managers.

Dealing with Conflict

Schools do not exist in an ideal world; they are part of a world where profound inequalities exist, and where dominant cultures are discriminatory, often on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, 'ability' and class. Pupils and staff bring such experiences with them into school.

Conflict should be used constructively; on these occasions equal opportunities should be discussed and any conflict must be resolved in a positive way. The school policy should be explained clearly and calmly to anyone whose behaviour suggests that they do not understand it. We should be working towards practice which develops and values the self-esteem of all the children and members of the school community and encourages them to challenge behaviour which conflicts with the philosophy of the school.

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Parents

Our aim is to involve parents by communicating relevant information for them to participate fully in the schools equal opportunities policy.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy can be communicated to parents in the following ways:

- Through the Friends of St. Mary's
- Ensuring that information regarding current equal opportunities initiatives is available to parents, for instance through the school prospectus and the availability of policies on the school website
- Giving parents the opportunity to see teaching materials and how they are used in the school.
- Regular family learning sessions across all year groups
- Maintaining contact with community groups representing parents, especially religious and cultural groups, eg. Parish community.
- Responsibility to inform all regular visitors and volunteers within the school community e.g. parents and students of our school's expectations for equal opportunities to all.

Governors

School Governors should be closely linked with equal opportunities as it is their duty to ensure the school follows the current government legislation.

Review

The school's arrangements for equality of opportunity are evaluated to the extent to which all pupils, irrespective of gender, ability (including giftedness), ethnicity and social circumstances, have access to the curriculum and make the greatest possible progress.

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Evidence should include:

1. Standards of achievement of individuals and groups
2. Regular and robust assessment of pupils' needs within the curriculum
3. Admissions policies, intake, exclusions
4. Curriculum content and access
5. Class organisation and management, teaching and differentiation
6. The use made of support teachers, bilingual assistants and other provisions under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966
7. Pupils' relationships with both peers and adults within the school community

Appendix 1

Definitions (As defined in the Comprehensive Equality Policy of OCC March 2004):

Institutional racism: The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic groups.

A racist incident: Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

Victimisation: is where a person is treated less favourably than another because she/he has brought proceedings, given evidence, or raised a complaint by the Disability Discrimination, Race Relations or Sex Discrimination Acts.

Harassment: is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Direct discrimination: consists of treating a person less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race (etc), than others would be treated in the same or similar circumstances.

Indirect discrimination: consists of applying a provision, criterion or practice, which although applied equally to both sexes or all racial groups (etc) has the effect of excluding, penalising or treating less favourably a particular group, causing a detriment to those unable to comply and which cannot be justified.