



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Equal Opportunities Policy

### **Rationale:**

This Equality Policy for St Mary's Catholic Primary 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.

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity and
- foster good relations between groups.

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.

St Mary's Catholic Primary is an average primary school with low social deprivation and low numbers of ethnic minorities.

### **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.

### **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:**

- 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
- 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**

St Mary's Catholic Primary 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.

**The roles and responsibilities within our school community**

Our Headteacher will:

- Ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students and visitors and contractors are informed about the Equality Policy.
- Oversee the effective implementation of the policy and 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.

#### **Our Governing Body will:**

- Designate a committee with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy
- Ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School Development Plan when necessary (SDP).
- Support the Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary.
- Engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy.
- Evaluate and review the policy annually.

#### **Our pupils/students will:**

- Be involved in the 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
- Be encouraged to actively support the Policy

#### **Our parents/carers will:**

- Be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the 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 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

#### **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 made 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.

### **Responding to prejudice based incidents:**

We interpret our duties positively; take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice – based on 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, negative views of disabled people, sexism or sexual orientation. 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.

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 within cultures 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.

Reviewed September 2024