



Cowbit St Marys Church of England Primary School

Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

Cowbit St Mary's School is committed to promoting understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice. Equal Opportunity applies both for employees of the school and in the way the school provides education for the children in its care. Cowbit St Mary's School will take all steps necessary to ensure equality of opportunity for all. We aim to equip children with an awareness of our diverse society and to appreciate the value of difference. In carrying out its duties, the School will have due regard to the Equality Act 2010.

Every member of Cowbit St Mary's School is regarded as of equal worth and importance, irrespective of his/her religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, age, sexuality and/or disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, these are called 'Protected Characteristics'.

Every aspect of our activities has an equal opportunities dimension. This may be expressed explicitly in teaching materials and display, implicitly in classroom practice, or as part of the 'hidden curriculum' of social interaction amongst and between staff and children.

The school's environment influences the developing attitudes of the children within it and can be a powerful vehicle for the promotion of understanding and practice of equal opportunities.

Cowbit St Mary's School aims through its proactive approach to inclusion to enable our children to have an equality of access to their community.

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others in comparable circumstances because of their religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality and/or disability.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic. Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done, e.g. making an allegation of discrimination, bring a case under the Act. It is also unlawful to victimize a child for anything done in relation to the Act by their parents or sibling.

We promote the inclusion of all children and recognise the particular needs of those with SEN (Special Educational Needs), e.g. children with Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g. dyslexia), those with sensory or physical impairments, those with speech and language difficulties, and those with BESD (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties).

Staff also recognise and understand the needs of children who demonstrate characteristics within the autistic spectrum, and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The specific needs of those children with medical difficulties will also be met so far as we are able, and this includes the needs of Looked After children.

The Law and Discrimination/Harassment/Victimisation

The Equality Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour – direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Direct Discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat – or would treat – other people.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a ‘provision, criterion or practice’ is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic.

Harassment is ‘unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.’ This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but also potentially extends to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally cause offence because of a protected characteristic.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done (‘a protected act’) in connection with the Equality Act. A protected act might involve, e.g. making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, supporting another’s complaint, even if what that person said or did was incorrect or misconceived providing they were acting in good faith. It is unlawful to victimize a child because of something done by their parent or a sibling in relation to the Act. If the child themselves has done a protected act, e.g. made a complaint of discrimination against a teacher, then the child’s own good faith will be relevant.

Sex/Gender

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of his or her gender. The school has a duty to promote gender equality. The school will ensure that children of one sex are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils.

Racial

The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. The school will ensure that children of all races are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. The school will ensure that there are no practices which could result in unfair or less favourable treatment of such children. The school will take proactive steps to tackle racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations.

Disability

The school will have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for disabled persons and eliminate discrimination. For the purposes of Equal Opportunity, the school considers Disability to include not only physical disability, but also medical and learning disabilities.

With regard to disability, the school may treat a disabled person more favourably than a child who is not disabled and may make changes to its practices to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that a disabled person can benefit from what is being done to the same extent that a child without that disability can. Any changes or modifications made must be 'reasonable', and includes a duty to supply auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments.

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as when a person has a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

Age

Age discrimination by employers is unlawful. However direct and indirect age discrimination is not unlawful if it can be objectively justified.

Religion or Belief

Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief is unlawful. A lack of religion or a lack of belief are also protected characteristics. Unlawful religious discrimination can include discrimination against another person of the same religion or belief.

Sexual Orientation

Discrimination, Harassment or Victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender reassignment is unlawful, and this includes the parents/carers of children. It is unlawful to treat a child less favourably because of the sexual orientation/gender reassignment of their parent/carer.

Aims of this Policy:

- To ensure that children and staff recognise that discrimination on the basis of religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality, age and/or disability is not acceptable.
- To provide an environment in which all children and staff feel safe enough to express and question views.
- To ensure that all staff feel valued and supported and have appropriate advice and encouragement for professional development.
- Ensure the principles and practice of equal opportunities apply to all members of the school community: students; teaching and non-teaching staff; parents; governors and visitors.
- Equal Opportunities practices should be evident in
 - a) the formal curriculum (the programme of lessons);
 - b) the informal curriculum (extra-curricular activities); and
 - c) the 'hidden' curriculum (the ethos of the school, the quality of personal relationships etc).
- To educate, develop and prepare all our children for life whatever their religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality, age and/or disability.
- Children and teachers contribute towards a happy and caring environment by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals.
- Children are seen as individuals and each child's education and care is to be developed in direct relation to their needs and abilities. This approach is to be based upon sound knowledge and awareness of an appropriate range of teaching and learning styles, teaching interventions, behavioural methods, medical and diagnostic issues.

Policy into Practice

a) Admission

Cowbit St Mary's School follows the LA and Governing Body Admission Policies that do not permit religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality, age or disability of the child or the child's parents/carers to be used as criteria for admission.

b) Registration

Children and staff names will be accurately recorded. Children will be encouraged to accept and respect names from other cultures.

c) Discrimination

All forms of discrimination by any person within the school's responsibility will be treated seriously as such behaviour is unacceptable. Racist symbols, badges and insignia on clothing and equipment are forbidden in school. Staff should be aware of possible cultural assumptions and bias within their own attitudes. In all staff appointments the best candidate will be appointed based on strict professional criteria. Parents should be aware of the school's commitment to equal opportunities. All cases of discrimination or prejudice will be taken seriously and dealt with, as appropriate, according to existing sanction procedures. A record of incidents should be kept.

d) Harassment/Victimisation

Harassment is any unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them on the grounds of religion/belief, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality, age and/or disability. We will take steps to eliminate any form of harassment/victimisation at Cowbit St Mary's School.

e) Language

The school views linguistic diversity positively. Children and staff must feel that their natural language is valued.

f) Culture, Class and Race

Cowbit St Mary's School acknowledges that members of the school come from diverse cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds and we endeavour to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in order to help to promote a school and a society in which there is social, religious and racial harmony.

We will take positive action to enable every individual to raise his/her self-esteem, expectations and performance so as to have wider choices in life.

We understand the need to be different without being excluded.

We are happy for pupils to wear special forms of dress where these are an essential part of their religious or cultural background - Sikhs' turbans, Muslim girls' headscarves etc.

We value the history, experience and contribution of our multi-cultural community and seek to express this in the curriculum and life of our school.

We try to counter negative, patronising and stereotyped views.

We will not tolerate racist behaviour in any form.

g) Gender

We aim to have no gender bias at all in the work that is carried out in school and the example that we set.

We are committed to providing a curriculum which avoids unnecessary historical gender divisions. All pupils experience all subjects .

We try to ensure:

1. That teachers allocate their time fairly between the sexes.
2. That all pupils have opportunities for working with pupils of both sexes.
3. That we break down traditional sex stereotypes.
4. That pupils are encouraged to pursue any subjects and interests.
5. We do not differentiate between the sexes in respect of our school uniform.

h) Religion/Belief

We acknowledge that members of the school come from diverse backgrounds: some have no religious faith, others are committed to a greater or lesser extent to a variety of religions. We seek to promote an ethos of tolerance based on understanding of and respect for the beliefs and practices of others.

We do not seek to make pupils religious, but to teach them about religion.

i) Sexuality

Cowbit St Mary's School will respect the sexual orientation/gender reassignment of members of the school and will ensure there is no direct or indirect harassment against anyone as a result of his or her actual or perceived sexual orientation/gender reassignment, or because he or she is friends with or associates with someone of a particular sexual orientation/gender reassignment.

j) Disability

We will take steps to promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others, and ensure that disability is portrayed positively in school. We will eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization that is related to disability, and take steps to meet the needs of disabled people. The School will produce a Disability and Accessibility Plan which will be reviewed on an annual basis. When promoting equality of disabled people, this includes not only physical disabilities but also medical and learning difficulties.

k) Special Educational Needs

We aim to ensure that everyone, both adults and children, respect the needs of those children with Special Educational Needs. We will not tolerate any discrimination, harassment or victimisation against anyone as a result of his or her SEN (this includes - Cognition & Learning difficulties, Specific Learning difficulties, Speech and Language difficulties, Social and Communication difficulties (ASD), Social, Emotional or Mental Health difficulties, or Sensory, Medical or Physical difficulties).

l) Resources

Cowbit St Mary's School aim is to provide for all children according to their needs. Resources are to reflect cultural and racial backgrounds of children to support positive self-imagery. We try to ensure that our resources reflect the whole range of races, gender, religions, cultures etc. that will benefit all children. When appropriate, displays will reflect a range of cultures and races. All materials in use in Cowbit St Mary's School will be monitored.

m) Relationships

Relationships between staff, children and management should be such that any member of the school acting in a manner contrary to the spirit of this policy is made aware of the unacceptable nature of his/her behaviour. This will be done in a supportive manner to encourage change and reinforce the principles of equal opportunities.

When it is uncomfortable or inappropriate to address an issue between staff then management must be made aware of the incident and the leadership team will address the incident with the staff or child involved. In extreme circumstances formal procedures may be taken by the Headteacher in line with local education authority policy.

n) Recruitment

The Headteacher will ensure that in recruitment procedures any advertisements, short-listing and interview procedures are without any hint of direct or indirect discrimination and so promoting equality of opportunity. We will not require applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire as part of the application procedure. Any health-related questions must be targeted, necessary and relevant to the position applied for. During employment it would be unlawful to discriminate in the way opportunities for promotion, transfer or training were offered. It is also unlawful to discriminate in dismissals, particularly in redundancy dismissals.

o) Positive Action

Whenever necessary, the school will target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics.

p) Curriculum

The content of the school curriculum is excluded from the Act. However, the delivery of the curriculum is explicitly included.

q) Reasonable Adjustments

The school has a duty to make reasonable adjustments as follows:

- Where something would place a disabled child at a disadvantage compared to other children, then we will take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.
- Consider providing an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled child when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the child faces in comparison to non-disabled children.

Awareness of policy

Parents and pupils will be made aware that the school has an Equal Opportunities policy and is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and pupils.

Monitoring and review

The Headteacher, staff and Governors will review this policy annually.

Updated December 2017

Reviewed by Governors ____/____/____

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Signed Chair of Governors

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To be reviewed November 2018