



Equal Opportunities Policy and Guidelines

Making Oakleigh fair and equal for all

Updated January 2018

This policy to be reviewed every 4 years.

Next review date – January 2022

Rationale

Oakleigh School and the community in which we are situated are diverse, multilingual and cohesive. As a diverse school, we value and celebrate the richness of culture, backgrounds and traditions we share. The richness that our diversity brings helps to make Oakleigh an excellent place to learn and work. Our school is responsive to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of its users and the community.

This policy sets out our values, our approach to equalities and understanding of how we place it at the heart of everything we do.

Purpose

Oakleigh School is committed to improving the quality of experience and wider participation in the economic, educational, cultural, social and community life of our pupils and their families. We also aim to have a staff that reflects the diversity of talent, experiences and skills of the community.

GUIDELINES

Legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 brings together, supersedes or updates much of the previous law relating to equality.

The Act covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes people with no religious belief
- sex – male or female
- sexual orientation - straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

We welcome our duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion.

We recognise that these duties are essential for achieving the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters framework, and that they reflect international human rights standards as

expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Equality Duty

The Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) is a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees. The Equality Duty encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people's opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

The Equality Duty has three aims. It requires the school to have **due regard** to the need to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; for instance, it covers discrimination not just with regards to sexual orientation, but also transgender, intersex, questioning or gender dysphoria - gender dysphoria is a recognised condition in which a person feels that there is a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity (biological sex is assigned at birth, depending on the appearance of the infant. Gender identity is the gender that a person "identifies" with, or feels themselves to be).

It is also unlawful to discriminate because of the sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment of another person with whom the pupil is associated.

So, for example, a school must not discriminate by refusing to admit a pupil because his parents are gay men or lesbians.

- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having **due regard** means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies – such as in how they act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policy; how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and how they commission and procure from others.

Having due regard to the need to **advance equality of opportunity** involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve making use of an exception or the positive action provisions in order to provide a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic – such as providing computer training to older people to help them access information and services.

Taking account of disabled people's disabilities

The Equality Duty also explicitly recognises that disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. Public bodies should therefore take account of disabled people's impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs.

Implementing the Equality Duty

Public bodies need to consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. The Equality Duty will be one of a number of factors that need to be considered. The weight given to the Equality Duty, compared to the other factors, will depend on how much that function affects discrimination, equality of opportunity and good relations and the extent of any disadvantage that needs to be addressed.

It is recommended that public bodies

- publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and
 - set equality objectives, at least every four years
- (Equalities Act 2010 Guidance 2011)

Guiding principles

In fulfilling the legal obligations referred to above, we are guided by seven principles. We are committed to ensuring maximum participation for all users of the school by ensuring that consideration is given to, and adaptations made to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of their gender, disability, ethnicity or socio-economic background.

Principle 1: All learners are of equal value

- We are aware of and responsive to the differing needs of our children and users and seek to ensure equality of opportunities and quality of experience for all.
- We are committed to providing opportunities for pupil voice to be heard and offer a range of communication strategies to enable children to communicate e.g. Makaton, on body signing, PECS, switches, intensive interaction, eye pointing. We are responsive to children's communication in less formal ways, such as stilling, posture, facial expression and gazing.
- We value the ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status of our children, parents/carers, staff and members of the community.
- We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure the school environment and its activities are as accessible and welcoming as possible for pupils, staff and visitors to the school. We are also committed to ensuring staff with a disability have equality of opportunity.
- We believe that children learn best when they feel secure and valued. Our school ensures that all pupils' languages, religious and cultural experiences are valued as part of the curriculum and that there is a process to support the induction and integration of new arrivals and other mid-phase entrants.

Principle 2: We recognize and respect diversity

Treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate, but are differentiated, as appropriate, to take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barriers and disadvantage which people may face.

Our curriculum reflects the diversity within our school and community and provides opportunities for this diversity to be celebrated. We appreciate the richness that diversity brings to children's learning and use this to enhance children's learning experiences.

As a school, we recognize that parents are their child's first and most important educator and that family is central to a child's education. We recognize that, in order to best support the child, staff need to understand the life and culture of the family.

- We are pro-active in finding out about a child's home life and in bringing this home life to school – understanding key relationships in the child's family, knowing the names of family members and through learning key words in home languages,
- Throughout the year, we encourage families to come to school to share their knowledge and experience and we undertake home visits to get to know children and families at home.
- We will monitor the progress and achievement of pupils by the relevant and appropriate protected characteristics. This information will help the school to ensure that individual pupils are achieving their potential, the school is being inclusive in practice, and trends are identified which inform the setting of our equality objectives in the school improvement plan.
- We will regularly consider the ways in which the taught and wider curriculum will help to promote awareness of the rights of individuals and develop the skills of participation and responsible action.
- We translate key documents and letters home into community languages and provide interpreters for meetings where necessary.
- We work collaboratively with parents and other agencies to ensure that the social, moral, spiritual and cultural needs of their children are known to staff and upheld in school.
- We value and respect the diversity within our local, national and global communities and use the richness that this diversity brings to enhance children's learning opportunities.

Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging

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We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- our school's place in the community, with children with disabilities and learning difficulties being seen in a positive light and as valued members of the community.
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and a culture in which difference is valued and celebrated.
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, women and men, and an absence of sexual harassment

Principle 4: Staff recruitment, retention and development

Policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- We are committed to incorporating equalities considerations into our employment policies and practices.
- Promoting equality of opportunity to our staff is a fundamental commitment.
- As we develop the future of our school we will seek to offer training and employment opportunities that fully cultivate our staff's skills and talent to serve the children and school community.
- We want to create a school of high productivity and skill, where people can flourish and maintain a healthy work-life balance reflecting the full talent and diversity of our communities.

- We want our staff to achieve their potential and understand their role in helping the school meet its statutory equality duties. We expect all staff to understand the school's equalities values and apply them to their job roles.
- Information about protected characteristics in relation to staff recruitment, retention, and promotions is collected by the local authority to ensure all candidates have equality of opportunity. We will not ask health-related questions to job applicants before offering a job, unless it relates to an intrinsic function of the work they do. We will make reasonable adjustments such as providing auxiliary aids for our disabled staff.

Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist

In addition to avoiding or minimizing possible negative impacts, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist:

- We see all inequalities and barriers to equality of opportunity as unacceptable, are proactive in finding solutions and are committed to overcoming these obstacles.
- We celebrate differences between people in our school, local, national and international communities. We consider diversity to increase the richness of children's learning environments and the working environments of staff.
- We provide opportunities for men, women, girls and boys, with or without disabilities from a range of religions, cultures, ethnicities, economic and social backgrounds to interact and work together in positive and meaningful ways.
- We welcome opportunities to work with other schools and organisations to reduce and remove barriers to learning and give opportunity for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, for example by organising inclusion opportunities for our pupils and their mainstream peers.

Principle 6: We consult widely

People affected by a policy or activity should be consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. We involve and consider:

- children
- parents/carers
- staff
- governors
- users of the school
- our partners

Principle 7: Society as a whole should benefit

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life:

- We are committed to providing positive learning experiences for children with and without disabilities through our inclusion links with local schools
- We are committed to working collaboratively with other agencies and departments to ensure that our commitment to the Every Child Matters framework is upheld, and that children and families have the best quality of experience possible.
- Our curriculum provides learning opportunities at an appropriate level which highlight issues and events in the local, national and international community and give children the opportunity to be active citizens.

Action plans

We recognise that the actions resulting from a policy are what make a difference.

We provide opportunities for all users of the school to provide feedback about equality of opportunity and create action plans to address the needs of our users. We are responsive to the changing needs of our users.

The curriculum

We review, monitor and adapt our curriculum in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the seven principles outlined above. Through our curriculum we seek to provide opportunities for children to experience and celebrate the diversity of our local, national and global community and to construct a confident self-identity and group identity, which acknowledge their cultural and individual heritage.

Religious observance

We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils, parents and other users of the school and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

We are proactive in upholding the religious needs of our children, ensuring that the dietary requirements of their religion are honoured at school. Where possible we aim to ensure that children's religious practices are incorporated into school life.

Continuous Professional development and training

We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Ethos and organisation

We ensure that the principles listed above apply also to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- children's progress, attainment and assessment
- children's personal development, welfare and well-being
- teaching styles and strategies
- admissions and attendance
- staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- care, guidance and support
- behaviour support
- working in partnership with parents and carers
- working with the wider community

TACKLING DISCRIMINATION - Breaches of the policy

Oakleigh school has a zero tolerance to discrimination on the basis of

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- gender including intersex people.
- sexual orientation

All staff are expected to challenge any prejudice or stereotyping they encounter or observe and to report any incidents to the Headteacher.

Discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or other factors such as socio-economic status, can take many forms including:

- Physical assault against a person or group because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender;
- Exclusion from groups and games;
- Use of derogatory names, insults and jokes;
- Unwanted looks or comments;
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti;
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory badges or insignia;
- Verbal abuse and threats;
- Incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victims' race, disability, gender or sexual orientation;
- Discriminatory comments in the course of discussion;
- Ridicule of an individual for difference e.g. food, music, religion, dress etc.;
- Refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

We take seriously our obligation to report regularly to the local authority about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how they were dealt with.

Responsibilities

Governing Body

- Ensure that the school complies with equality-related legislation.
- Ensure that the policy and its procedures are implemented by the Headteacher.
- Ensure all other school policies promote equality.
- Give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making decisions.

Headteacher

- Implement the policy and its related procedures.
- Make all staff aware of their responsibilities and provide training as appropriate to enable them to effectively deliver this policy.
- Take appropriate action in any case of actual or potential discrimination.
- Ensure that all staff understand their duties regarding recruitment and providing reasonable adjustments to staff. It is unlawful for an employer to enquire about the health of an applicant for a job until a job offer has been made, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work - for example ensuring that applicants for a PE teaching post have the physical capability to carry out the duties. Schools should no longer require job applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire. Neither should a school seek out past sickness records until they have made a job offer.
- Ensure that all staff and pupils are aware of the process for reporting and following up bullying and prejudice-related incidents. For our pupils this may involve interpreting what has happened to them using body language, gesture, facial expression as well as their communication system.

All staff

- Enact this policy, its commitments and procedures, and their responsibilities associated with this policy.
- Deal with bullying and discriminatory incidents, and know how to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping.
- Promote equality and good relations and not discriminate on any grounds.
- support pupils, families and staff who have English as an additional language and remove barriers to effective communication.
- Attend such training and information opportunities as necessary to enact this policy and keep up to date with equality legislation.
- To be models of equal opportunities through their words and actions.

Visitors (e.g. parent helpers, contractors)

- To be aware of, and comply with, the school's equality policy.
- To refrain from engaging in discriminatory behaviour (for example, racist language) on school premises.

Information and resources

We ensure that the content of this policy is known to all staff, governors and parents.

For more information download guidance from the DfE:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/the-equality-act-2010>

and Equality Human Rights website:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com> which includes the guidance for education providers (schools)

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a duty on all maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion.

*The following provides information on how we have due regard to the need to **advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations**. This includes steps we are taking to tackle and meet the needs of particular individuals and groups of pupils with protected characteristics.*

Disability

How we advance equality of opportunity:

- We support children and their families by meeting their individual needs.
- We work in close collaboration with families and agencies that serve them – for example community nursing teams, community occupational therapy, housing, social care.
- We take steps to ensure that pupils have access to experiences and opportunities similar to those of their mainstream peers.
- We involve children, their families and staff in the changes and improvements we make and consult them on issues affecting them.
- We are fully accessible - we keep this under review to ensure that we are informed of new innovations that our pupils can access.
- We plan, implement and evaluate inclusive projects with local mainstream schools so that children have the opportunity to learn from and with each other.
- We provide outreach and support if requested to local mainstream schools to help them support their children who have special educational needs.
- Our family support workers provide in home support for parents/carers/siblings, as well as parent/carer groups and holiday opportunities.

- We promote our inclusive attitudes and ethos by opening our school to visitors such as trainee teachers, parties visiting from abroad, community faith leaders etc.
- We work closely with borough transport to ensure that children travel to school safely and happily.
- We are visible in our local community and have strong community links with the local café and shops, the allotments and local schools.
- We support our children during hospital visits and provide outreach and support to hospital staff as appropriate.
- Where appropriate, we provide adjustments or support to members of staff and volunteers who have special educational needs or a disability. This could be through internal discussion or via the LA Occupational Health.
- Where appropriate, we provide adjustments or support to parents/carers who have a special educational needs or disability. This could be through support from organisations such as Barnet Mencap.

How we foster good relations and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development:

- We open the school to the wider community through events such as the Summer Fair and other fundraising events, promoting a positive view of disability within our community.
- We provide Religious Education for pupils and sometimes invite families and members of the community to participate in these sessions.
- We model inclusive practices by providing inclusive learning opportunities to which we invite children from local schools.
- Where appropriate children participate in inclusive activities with children who share their faith.
- We have links with local places of worship and children participate in visits to these places, as well as welcoming special people to our school.
- Our respect and value of difference and diversity is reflected in our curriculum, which provides children with a broad experience of the world.
- We take part in events such as Sign to Sing, World Book Day and inclusive sporting events.
- We ensure that the curriculum has positive images of people who have disabilities.
- We talk to children in local schools about our pupils with disabilities and how they learn. We provide opportunities for these children to visit and learn more about our school.
- We also have strong links in the wider community, for example links with the British Museum, Tottenham Hotspur coaching, All Saints and Manorside churches.

Ethnicity and race (including EAL learners)

How we advance equality of opportunity:

- We support children and their families by meeting their individual needs.
- We work closely with parents/carers and families to improve outcomes for particular groups.
- Our family support workers work in close collaboration with families, encouraging participation in school life.
- We link with groups, organisations and projects in the local community.
- We celebrate the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of children and families and encourage families to share this with us.
- We plan and deliver exciting learning opportunities which reflect and celebrate the diversity of our school.
- Our assemblies reflect the diversity of our school and provide the opportunity to celebrate festivals that are special to children in the school.

- We have a diverse staff group who speak a range of languages. We encourage staff to talk to children and families in their home languages when possible.
- We celebrate the diversity of our community through activities such as 'Community Languages Week' and 'Black History Month'.

How we foster good relations and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development:

- The school's diversity is part of the fabric of the school, enhancing learning opportunities and enriching the curriculum.
- We ensure that curriculum resources positively reflect diversity of culture, race and gender.
- We provide children with opportunities to learn about the experiences and achievements of different communities and cultures.
- We aim to educate staff so that they are confident in working with families from a range of diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- We challenge bias and promote diversity through resources and materials that positively reflect diversity. Resources, including books and music, are chosen throughout our planning to reflect the breadth of our school community and diversity in the wider world.
- We promote positive relationships between families in school through events such as Parent Workshops, Sibling Groups and Family Therapy.
- We organise special events and celebrations such as Black History Month, Community Languages & Road Safety weeks and Fairtrade Fortnight, and invite children from local schools to visit to maximise the impact of these activities.
- We have taken part in award and accreditation schemes such as the International School Award and Investors in People.

Gender

How we advance equality of opportunity:

- We support children and their families by meeting their individual needs.
- We identify and address barriers to participation of boys and girls and activities.
- We challenge all forms of gender stereotyping.
- We encourage male and female parents, carers and siblings to be involved in school life and contribute to their children's learning and progress.
- We provide opportunities for children to learn from male and female role models.
- Children have opportunities to interact with girls and boys of their own age group, and older children through inclusive activities with local primary and secondary schools.

How we foster good relations and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development:

- We ensure that children experience positive, non-stereotypical images of women and men, girls and boys across the curriculum.
- We encourage male and female parents, carers and siblings to take part in events such as Community Languages Week, Be Bright Be Seen, Black History month etc.
- We provide opportunities for children to take part in a broad range of leisure activities, as appropriate to their likes, age and development rather than their gender.
- We encourage participation of male parents/carers through events such as Father's Story Week and parent/carers workshops.

Religion and belief

How we advance equality of opportunity:

- The school's religious/spiritual diversity is part of the fabric of the school, enhancing learning opportunities and enriching the curriculum.

- We work alongside local places of worship so that children can experience being in these places, and learning from people in these places.
- We encourage children to develop their sense of being special, being part of something special, identity and self-worth.
- We have links with local faith schools and some children have attended faith schools as part of their inclusion programmes.
- The religious needs of children and families are upheld and respected in school – for example, children’s dietary needs in relation to religion are met. Where appropriate children use alternate and augmentative communication to say prayers at particular times of day such as mealtimes and children are taught to tolerate articles of clothing that are important to wear.

How we foster good relations and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development:

- We provide Religious Education, in which we celebrate the different religions of children in the school, as well as those that have no religion.
- We have good relationships with families and use their knowledge of their own religions to ensure that their children’s religious needs are met.
- Children take part in collective worship, assemblies and visits to local places of worship. Assembly topics reflect the diversity of the school.
- We communicate respectfully, challenging misconceptions and being mindful of ‘over generalisation’ about religious needs.
- Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural development is a part of the curriculum and is communicated to parents in the Programme of Study.
- We have been recognised by the Accord Coalition for Inclusive Education for the outstanding way in which we embed an ethos of inclusion and mutual respect.

Monitoring and evaluation

We are aware of our pupil’s learning needs, disabilities, ethnicity and background and support them and their families to enable maximum achievement and participation.

We have two Equalities Objectives per school year, which can be seen on our website. These are evaluated at the end of each school year.

We collect, study and use quantitative and qualitative data relating to the implementation of this policy, and make adjustments as appropriate.

We welcome feedback about the impact of our policies and practices on the school, local and global communities and are responsive to feedback.

This policy to be reviewed every 4 years.

Next review date – January 2022