

Oakwood School

Equal Opportunities, Racial Equality Policy and Community Cohesion

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Introduction

Oakwood School declares its belief in the equal value and equal treatment of all people, and does not discriminate on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, either by direct and/or indirect discrimination.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- The contribution of all pupils is valued.
- Stereotypical views are challenged and pupils learn to appreciate and view positively difference in others, whether arising from race, sex, ability or disability.
- Pupils are enabled to participate safely in clothing appropriate to their religious beliefs, particularly in subjects such as science, design and technology and physical education.
- Using materials which reflect social and cultural diversity and provide positive images of race, sex and disability, and which are free from discrimination and stereotyping of any kind.
- Take account of pupils' specific religious or cultural beliefs relating to representation of ideas and experiences.
- Promote good relations in school and the community.
- Encourage all relationships to be characterised by a caring, courteous mutual respect for all.
- Ensure that there is equality of access for all students to any part of the curriculum. (Recommendation 67 from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report states 'That consideration should be given to the amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order to better reflect the needs of a diverse society').
- Operate an equal opportunities policy in the recruitment, selection and promotion of staff. Governors should ensure that procedures for advertisements, selection and recruitment, reflect principles of equal opportunities and the law relating to this issue.
- Offer staff equal access to personal and professional development courses.
- Oakwood School adheres to the protected characteristics of The Equality Duty (April 2011) which ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work.
- Oakwood School implements and fully supports 'Change for Children' which is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children - from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups - will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively. Walsall Local Authority has produced The Child Concern Model.

The guiding principles therefore are:

Principle 1 : All learners are of equal value:

Here at Oakwood School we see all learners and potential learners as of equal value:

- Whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status.
- Whichever gender.

Principle 2 : We recognise 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 barrier and disadvantage which people may face in relation to:

- Disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made.
- Ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised.
- Gender, so that boys and girls, men and women are recognised.

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

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

- Positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people.
- 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 an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents.
- 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:

- Whether or not they are disabled.
- Whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status.
- Whichever gender.

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 between:

- Disabled and non-disabled people
- People of a different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- Girls and boys, men and women.

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, this may be:

- Disabled people as well as non-disabled
- People from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Boys and girls, men and women.

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 cohesion, and a greater participation in public life of:

- Disabled people as well as non-disabled.
- People of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- Both men and women, boys and girls.

Action plans:

- We recognise that the action plans resulting from a policy are what make a difference.
- Each year we draw upon an action plan within the framework of the overall school development plan, setting out the specific actions and projects we shall undertake to implement and principles as outlined in paragraph 5 above.

The curriculum

We keep each curriculum subject or area under review in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the seven principles in paragraph 5 above.

Ethos and organisation

We ensure that the principles listed in paragraph 5 above apply also to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- Learners' progress, attainment and assessment
- Learners' personal development, welfare and well-being
- Teaching styles and strategies
- Admissions and attendance
- Staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- Care, guidance and support
- Behaviour, discipline and exclusions

- Working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- Working with the wider community.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice-related bullying

Oakwood School is opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of fulfilling the legal duties referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2:

- Prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- Prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and those directed against travellers, refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Prejudices reflecting sexism and homophobia

There is guidance on the 'staff area' of the school store on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, addressed, recorded and dealt with.

Oakwood School takes seriously its obligation to report regularly to the local authority on the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents and how they are dealt with.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and strategies are implemented.

A member of the governing body has a watching brief regarding the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

All staff are expected to:

- Promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- Deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- Identify and challenge bias and stereotyping in the curriculum
- Support pupils in their class for whom English is an additional language
- Keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work

Information and resources

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

All staff and governors have access to a selection of resources which discuss and explain concepts of equality, diversity and community cohesion in appropriate detail.

Religious observance

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

Staff 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.

Breaches of the policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the headteacher and the governing body.

Monitoring and evaluation

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

In particular we collect, analyse and use data relation to achievement, broken down as appropriate according to disabilities and special educational needs, ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, national origin and national status and gender.

To review good practice we make use of a range of auditing schedules.

THE LEGAL CASE

The Equality Act, 2010 has extended the definition discrimination. It clearly defines the illegal practice of Direct and Indirect discrimination as follows:

- *Direct discrimination*: when you treat a pupil less favourable than you would treat another pupil because of a protected characteristic. It involved real and hypothetical comparators; it can never be justified.
- *Indirect discrimination* when you apply a provision, criterion or practice in the same way for a group of pupils but which has the effect of putting pupils sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage, and you cannot justify the practice as being 'a proportionate means of justifying a legitimate aim'.

(Definition of protected characteristics: race, colour, national origin, religion, gender (including pregnancy), disability, age and citizenship status).

The public sector Equality Duty, (section 149 of The Equality Act, came into force on 5th April 2011. The Equality Duty 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 lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

We recognise that we have a duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion.

We recognise that these four sets of 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, and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Race Relations Act applies to all aspects of education. The Act makes it unlawful for LEA's and governing bodies of schools and colleges to discriminate in relation to their education functions. Under the Act, these bodies have a duty to provide facilities for education and related benefits or services without racial discrimination. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires schools and LEAs from April, 2001, to have 'due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups'.

The meaning of indirect discrimination has been amended as of 19th July, 2003 and a new class for harassment has been introduced. These changes are to implement a European Directive. However, in most cases, the difference between the two tests for direct and indirect discrimination will not be very great.

MONITORING

This will be achieved by target setting and evaluation on either a termly or annual basis dependent on the target. A target setting programme will be drawn up on an annual basis and distributed to staff.

ENVIRONMENT

Due regard must be given to Health and Safety legislation. Oakwood School ensures this by having a Health and Safety Representative.

Good displays and clear notices should reflect the wide diversity of society and be welcoming.

GENERAL

The implementation of the policy should be evaluated regularly in order to assess the success of the policy and if the need arises be modified or adapted.

All staff and pupils at Oakwood School, whatever their background should feel secure in the knowledge that the establishment will not accept any form of unfair discrimination or prejudiced behaviour.

All curriculum policies will reflect the ethos of this policy.