



**ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL  
and  
ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**'Live together, pray together, learn together and grow together  
in Christ'**



## Equal Opportunities

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### Policy Statement

We understand "equal opportunities" to describe an environment in which no child or adult is prevented from taking a full part in the life of the school as a result of:

- age
- gender
- physical needs
- behavioral needs
- learning needs
- ethnic background
- religious background
- married status
- civil partnership status
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- Political opinion (Northern Ireland).

At our school, we benefit from the diversity of experience that our pupils bring. We welcome differences and celebrate culture, respecting the needs of the individual, the group and the school community as a whole. We seek to share the different cultures represented here to inform and enrich.

We recognise the importance of allowing all our pupils and their families equal access, as far as possible, to the facilities and activities we have to offer. High standards are possible for all and we seek to ensure that our expectations are challenging everyone, whatever their level of intellectual or physical ability, gender, race or religion. We try to extend this welcome to our staff, parents and guardians, pupils and the community.

Our pupils and families may have unequal starting points and may need special attention and provision in order to work with others on a more equal basis. We seek to provide these opportunities and raise awareness within the community of the needs that they have.

It is important that we encourage the active involvement of our pupils and help them to understand their rights as well as the need to respect the rights of others. We actively engage with our community to ensure that prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are challenged and to provide a harmonious working environment in which everyone feels valued.

## **The Aims of the Policy**

We aim to:

- achieve the highest standards of teaching and learning for everyone, irrespective of ethnicity, religious belief, age, gender, ability and disability or social background
- encourage respect for and understanding of the beliefs, doctrines and personal circumstances of individuals
- involve, as far as possible, representatives from diverse groups within our catchment in school life
- consider, when defining school policy and procedure, the implications for different groups within our catchment
- work with other schools in order to share strengths and seek ideas for improvement
- seek to promote the welfare in school of individuals who have specific physical, emotional, learning and religious needs
- Deal swiftly, effectively and firmly with comments and incidents that are detrimental to the well-being of others.

## **Procedure**

### **Responsibilities**

It is expected that all staff, pupils and adults will pay due regard to the feelings of others and their needs and will implement this policy to the best of their ability. A spirit of fairness and openness will be encouraged and negative stereotyping is prohibited.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers are responsible for:

- ensuring the implementation of this policy to the best of their ability within the classroom and in their own dealings with staff, pupils and the school community
- contributing to discussions about equal opportunity issues
- monitoring their own procedures and routines to ensure that pupils are treated equitably
- referring incidents and concerns, where appropriate, to the Head.

### ***School Staff***

All school staff are responsible for:

- setting an example to pupils in terms of their treatment of one another and by displaying tolerance and understanding towards the beliefs and cultures of others
- ensuring that policies and procedures are implemented
- being vigilant for incidents of racism, sexism and prejudice and acting upon them
- encouraging pupils to try new activities that challenge stereotypical roles and prejudices.

## ***Senior Leadership Team***

The senior leadership team (SLT) is responsible for:

- ensuring the place of equal opportunities within the school's development plan
- reporting to governors on a regular basis
- recording and dealing with incidents of racism, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour
- co-ordinating the curriculum in conjunction with subject leaders/department heads to ensure equality of opportunity is represented in the core and foundation subjects
- ensuring that equal opportunities is covered within all subject policies and plans
- providing opportunity for resources to be ordered to support this policy
- monitoring performance by groups of pupils in their subject either through analysis or discussion with other senior staff
- ensuring the application of the admissions policy
- continuing to monitor and formulate accessibility plans in conjunction with the governing body
- continuing to monitor the progress of actions identified in development plans
- being instrumental in the review and evaluation of actions and their impact
- helping to identify positive actions to tackle particular disadvantage.

## ***The Governing Body***

The governing body is responsible for:

- ensuring that there is an equal opportunities policy in place and reviewing its content and efficacy on an annual basis
- assessing the impact of the policy on the standards attained by different groups within the school
- making reasonable adjustments if the premises or employment arrangements limit access to particular community groups or individuals on the basis of disability or gender
- planning to increase over time the accessibility of school to disabled pupils
- receiving feedback as part of the Head's report and questioning school practice
- giving due regard to its own membership and the recruitment of new governors
- participating in the preparation and publication of the school development plans
- ensuring that there is provision of auxiliary aids and services
- assessing the impact of this policy
- publishing the results of its annual monitoring.

## **Pupil Attainment and Progress**

All groups of pupils in the school are carefully monitored to ensure that they make the progress expected and achieve their targets.

Subject leaders and department heads monitor the progress of pupils within their subject. Termly progress meetings with class teachers and within the department enable staff to identify any pupils who are falling behind and need additional support. In some cases, this will

be individual support; in others, it will be an intervention programme as part of a group.

Barriers to learning such as difficulties with attendance and/or family circumstances are addressed by the learning mentor. The nurture group is available to support pupils with social and emotional needs.

In some cases, progress meetings may identify difficulties for a group of students, such as the performance of white boys in literacy. Where this is the case, a more extensive programme will be implemented.

Following the publication of RAISEonline, the performance of all groups of students is carefully analysed and comparisons are made. Conclusions are drawn from:

- the contextual value added information
- comparison with the targets set
- national statistics.

Any conclusions drawn from this are shared with the governing body and members of staff. This information is then used to inform the SIP and complete the school's self-evaluation form.

All students are expected to work towards their potential — whatever level that may be. Classroom organisation and planning must have regard to every pupil's individual needs. In order to ensure this is the case, we aim to include reference to equal opportunities through:

- curriculum and administrative policies
- budget planning
- the school development plan.

In terms of academic success, we are committed to supporting the learning of pupils across the ability range and, as such, are conscious of the fair distribution of resources not only at points crucial to performance table statistics. Different students will excel in different subjects. As such, we continue to protect the broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that all pupils have chance to succeed and have their skills and abilities recognised.

Our assessment policy sets the standard in terms of ensuring that we have a good understanding of what our pupils have learnt and how we can support them in the next stage of their learning. We emphasise the importance of involving pupils in self-assessment and enabling a genuine culture of consultation and involvement.

Individual assessment of English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils is completed annually by our ethnic minority achievement (EMA) teachers. The information from this assessment is compiled and used to demonstrate trends and individual progression. Discussion with class teachers is an important feature as are "focus" opportunities, where time is taken to assess the needs of individuals. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is separate from that provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

## **Constructing and Delivering the Curriculum**

### ***Curriculum Planning***

Curriculum planning aims to provide a stimulating, relevant and exciting curriculum that will motivate and enthuse our students. Pupils are encouraged to gain confidence in non-stereotyping curriculum areas and mixed gender groups are part of the school's normal working practice. Planning takes account of the need for differentiation to provide full access for pupils with a range of varying needs. Core subject leaders and department heads and the SEN team check planning to ensure that provision and resources are appropriate.

We include in our plans:

- opportunities for pupils to explore the local environment outside the school and work with the local community
- topics and projects that look at different groups, religions and cultures as they are present in the UK
- an international dimension where we study other countries and also apply an international perspective to other topics
- opportunities for pupils to exchange view and recognise the different perspectives that other groups might have.

## ***Classroom Management***

Each classroom is made equally welcoming to boys and girls with flexible seating arrangements and a variety of resources made accessible to support pupils in their learning.

Grouping is appropriate for specific purposes and positive discrimination is adopted in order to meet every student's rights under equal opportunities. A positive classroom ethos is developed with the use of rewards and boundaries and clear expectations for classroom behaviour. A well-established behaviour policy supports teachers in the maintenance of an environment conducive to learning.

All pupils feel valued, have individual targets and are clear about what they need to do next to make the progress expected of them.

## ***Resources***

Resources are prepared and selected that are free from gender or cultural bias, where possible. Regular audits of resources help ensure appropriateness and relevance. Where bias is identified, attention will be drawn to this and may be used as a teaching point to provoke discussion.

## ***Developing Our Ethos***

School ethos is set by the quality of relationships within a school and the sense of vision that the school has as a whole. Our aim statement is: [insert your own aim statement].

All adults and students within the school contribute to our ethos. The key factors are:

- the examples they set through relationships and actions
- the organisation of the school and the extent to which it values involvement, co-operation and consultation
- curriculum development and improvement, with a priority placed upon maintaining the broad and balanced curriculum
- school projects and groups that emphasise the importance of social skills and the development of self-esteem, eg circle time, the nurture group, school council
- a positive behaviour policy, where every opportunity is taken to praise and reward and encourage a sense of community and shared responsibility
- the scene set during assemblies and other collective opportunities including the use of houses and phase identity
- discussion of issues with pupils as part of the PHSE and citizenship curriculum
- taking every opportunity to celebrate our successes and strengths as a school
- that school and classroom ethos reflect the value placed on every individual student
- that school publications reflect our commitment to equal opportunities

- that we have a communication-friendly environment.

## ***Listening to Our Pupils***

The school council is only one way in which we enable our pupils' views to be shared. We place priorities on ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to express their views regularly and that actions are taken that reflect how they feel. This means including consultation and evaluation as part of every lesson and in all aspects of school life.

We actively encourage all groups to share their views through discussion groups, circle time and form tutor time. Pupils are consulted about all aspects of school policy and individual learning meetings provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their own learning needs. Listening to what pupils have to say alerts us to issues relevant to particular groups within the school and helps us to address these as they arise.

## **Involving Parents and the Local Community**

We seek to involve as many parents and members of the local community in our school as possible. We encourage active involvement through:

- written communications, such as newsletters, termly plans for parents and guides to the curriculum
- parents and open evenings
- drop-in sessions
- parent consultation mornings
- fundraising and social events
- attendance at assemblies
- attendance at and participation in concerts and other school events.

Where groups of parents seem less well represented in school, we set up activities and events that will encourage them to participate. Our learning mentor is actively involved in building bridges between school and hard-to-reach parents.

Some of our teaching staff are bilingual and are happy to translate into community languages where necessary. Bilingual members of staff are available at key times to help parents and other stakeholders access and share information.

Where parents are willing to help organise clubs and groups, the school aims to provide facilities and support. We encourage the letting of our school buildings and playing fields. We are committed to the principles of extended services and host an extensive range of clubs out of school hours.

## **Sharing Our Experiences**

Our school is fortunate to have a richness of culture and a diversity of ethnic origin that enables pupils to learn firsthand what it means to have different religious beliefs. Opportunities are taken within school to share these experiences through:

- assemblies where pupils explain about their faith
- religious education lessons where pupils are encouraged to share their experiences
- discussions during circle time or tutor group time where any misconceptions can be addressed
- the celebration of religious festivals in assemblies
- displays around the school that reflect a range of positive images.

We also aim to share our experiences with other schools. We do this through:

- hosting and sharing INSET where possible
- being part of learning networks that encourage co-operation and support
- enabling groups of pupils to visit other schools
- taking part in the inter-cultural festival
- inviting and encouraging participation from other local schools in our focus weeks.

Tutor group/circle time provides a good opportunity for pupils to discuss issues relating to equal opportunities in a sympathetic environment. Opportunities to share experiences within the community include:

- taking pupils out to the local hospices, hospitals and residential homes
- inviting speakers into school from different faiths, charities and organisations
- arranging trips within the locality, eg to local farms, arts centres, museums and parks
- business partnership projects
- working with local clubs and teams on different events.

Awareness of some of the difficulties relating to stereotyping and discrimination is important. Opportunities should be taken to discuss these through the curriculum as well as on a pastoral basis as the need arises.

## **School Procedures — Considerations**

Home circumstances have an effect upon pupils' experiences in school. We take into account the differences that exist and that may place extra pressure upon particular pupils at particular times. Special factors that need consideration include:

- the impact of large quantities of homework when pupils have commitments after school for religious observance
- the difficulties that some pupils experience in finding quiet zones to complete homework
- parents' difficulties with literacy and numeracy
- attitudes towards fundraising and how this might affect attendance at events
- any faith-related implications for the curriculum, eg swimming lessons, changing for PE lessons, sex education
- ways in which the school year might be affected by religious festivals
- requests for money for trips, charities and other extras that might cause difficulties for parents
- the need for special food to be made available for religious reasons
- the particular circumstances of some families that might make holidays necessary in term time.

We address these considerations through:

- providing parents with early notice of trips and additional activities
- keeping the cost of any trips as low as possible
- providing a fund to top up trips where insufficient funds can be raised
- providing as many lunchtime clubs as possible
- timing events after school so that they do not coincide with family commitments

- consulting the religious communities about the sex education policy
- being aware of the implications of religious festivals for attendance
- providing additional facilities for pupils so that they can participate fully in times of religious observance, eg a prayer room during Ramadan
- ensuring that school catering provides for different religious requirements
- providing appropriate training of staff to ensure that they understand the special requirements of the school community
- drawing up access management plans to help us ensure that the school provides physical access for all
- providing homework clubs and times during the school day when pupils can complete homework tasks
- providing adult literacy and numeracy classes and "keeping up with the children" courses.

## **Admissions and Exclusions**

As a catholic school, our governing body is the admissions authority. Our governing body acts in accordance with the admissions arrangements determined and published by our LA. We recognise our role in admitting pupils from all sections of the community with a broad range of individual needs. We are committed to working actively with other services to avoid the need for permanent exclusion.

## **Access to Facilities**

The school's access plans are reviewed and updated annually. These aim to make the school more accessible and able to provide for the variety of physical and sensory disabilities that current and future pupils may have. Our development planning provides the short-, medium- and long-term plan for adapting our school building to ensure it provides access for disabled people.

## **English as an Additional Language**

We have provision in the school through EMA funding to target pupils with language needs. Specialist teachers enable us to provide focused support and to target new pupils whose first language is not English. In recent years, the range of languages spoken has increased and every attempt is made to secure advice and support from an adult who speaks the pupil's first language.

The main purpose of EMA support is to ensure that our EAL pupils receive an education commensurate with their ability. Particular attention is paid to understanding in reading and writing. This might be pursued through support across the curriculum, particularly where speaking and listening opportunities exist.

On an annual basis the EMA timetable is reviewed according to the following principles.

- Focus time needs to be built in to assess and address the needs of individual EAL pupils.
- We need to recognise that small group work with speaking and listening activities is often of benefit to pupils with language needs.
- Pupils who are falling behind, and not making the progress expected, need to receive targeted support.

Our EMA member of staff is involved in all aspects of school life and is considered to be a very valuable member of our team. As such, he takes part in both school-based and county-

run INSET and is involved in planning and development.

Examination data is analysed by subject leaders and department heads, and consideration is given to the performance of ethnic minority girls and boys. Any specific trends are shared with EMA staff for further consideration and discussion of implications.

On an annual basis, EMA staff complete language development records in order to monitor the progress of EAL pupils throughout the school. It is important to recognise the distinction between EAL needs and SEN. Every attempt is made during the assessment process to distinguish between the two and address each set of needs appropriately. Wherever possible, the support of a mother tongue speaker will be used to enable this process.

## **Extended Services Provision**

The school is currently expanding its range of extended services activities. This includes the provision of additional clubs out of school hours, as well as adult learning courses and family support. The learning mentor is currently encouraging external services to use the school building to access families.

We have recently begun to closely monitor the uptake of these opportunities by different pupils groups and members of the community. An audit has been completed, which shows that not all groups are proportionally represented. We are currently addressing this by rescheduling some events as lunchtime activities. This situation will be monitored further.

## **Dealing with Issues**

We take pride in the way in which our pupils work together irrespective of differences of religion, ability and social background. However, on occasions, racism, sexism and bullying do occur. We acknowledge their presence and are committed to actively campaigning against them. We aim to tackle them by:

- maintaining an overall school ethos of respect and tolerance for one another
- insisting upon high expectations in relation to pupil conduct towards one another
- providing a range of opportunities for pupils of different ages to work together
- setting a good example ourselves as positive role models
- recording and addressing all incidents that are reported — incidents of racism being recorded separately along with any actions taken
- providing feedback on trends in incidents to the governing body
- taking advice from members of the local community and/or the LA where there are worrying trends or pressures
- applying our behaviour policy and appropriate sanctions where rules are broken
- working in conjunction with parents to discuss unhelpful attitudes and difficulties with social skills
- being alert to signs of racial harassment and bullying
- developing an ethos where concerns can be raised and discussed
- maintaining awareness of issues relating to harassment and bullying.

## **Has it been Successful?**

- How many racist incidents have been recorded?
- How many referrals for bullying have there been?

- How many positive comments have there been by adults visiting the school about the behaviour of the pupils?
- What do observations of playground staff suggest about the way pupils play together at lunchtime?
- What do lesson observations suggest about the way that pupils work together in class?
- How much do pupils understand about one another's communities, their beliefs and lifestyles?
- Do the displays around the school reflect the languages that the pupils speak?
- Do the resources available for class teacher reflect the experiences of the local community?

## **Linked Policies**

Other policies that should be referred to

- Anti-bullying.
- Assessment.
- Behaviour.
- Curriculum.
- Personnel.
- Sex education.
- Teaching and learning.