

St Michael's CE Primary School : Equality Scheme

Why we have developed this Equality Scheme

This Equality Scheme for St Michael's Church of England Primary School brings together schemes and action plans for Race, Gender and Disability equality, meeting the statutory duties in these areas. However, it goes far beyond these strands to include sexuality, religion & faith, age and every aspect which has the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community such as against those with special educational needs or potential language barriers. We are further committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. Our school embraces the aims of the Every Child Matters agenda and these have informed and shaped this document.

The purpose of this Scheme is to set out how our practice and policies can address discrimination, promote inclusive practice and ensure that those in our community requiring extra support receive it.

This scheme will be monitored annually, its impact measured against identified outcomes and reviewed every three years.

Our school within the wider context

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation.

St Michael's is a smaller than average school, serving a largely rural community. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with SEND (including statements). Deprivation indicators suggest that the two wards which contribute the greatest proportion of the school's cohort contain a lower than average percentage of adults in higher education, as well as a lower than average percentage of high social class households.

Overall aims of our scheme

- To eliminate discrimination and harassment.
- To promote equality of access within our school and within our wider community.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.

To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the scheme is organised using the five Every Child Matters themes:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being

Issues relating to adults within the school community can be embraced under these themes and reflected in the action plan.

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. Underlying our diversity lies commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs. 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
- Excellence. We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our community, the UK and the wider world. Excellence is to be found everywhere
- 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

Our vision for every child's development is summed up in our mission statement:

Together Everyone Achieves More

At St Michael's Church of England Primary School we create an active, challenging and secure environment in which we bring about the best in everyone. We strive to create a happy, Christian environment, where each child may grow in an awareness of him/herself, of others and of God.

In addition the 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 duties and responsibilities to eliminate discrimination and promote equality, including the requirement to involve the whole school community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all.

Our statutory duties are contained within:

- The Equality Bill (introduced to the House of Commons in April 2009 and anticipated to be enacted April 2010)
- Equality Act 2006 (which introduced the gender equality duty)
- Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Education and Inspection Act 2006 (which introduced the Community Cohesion duty)

(See *Appendix A* for further information about legislation)

We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of school life, including the provision of extended services.

These opportunities are likely to include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities.

- the participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children and young people and their parents
- preparation for entry to the school
- school policies
- breaks and lunchtimes
- the provision of school meals
- interaction with peers
- opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- exam arrangements
- behaviour management approach and sanctions
- exclusion procedures
- school clubs, activities and school trips
- the school's arrangements for working with other agencies
- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- learning and teaching and the planned curriculum
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- grouping of pupils
- homework
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school or Theatre in Education (TIE).
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare

The roles and responsibilities within our school community

Our Headteacher will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils and visitors and contractors are informed about the Equality Scheme
- oversee the effective implementation of the scheme
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the scheme
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the scheme and report to the Governing Body at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy
- ensure that the Senior Leadership team (SLT) is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it

Our governing body will:

- designate a governor with specific responsibility for the Equality Scheme
- ensure that the action plans arising from the policy are part of the School Development Plan (SDP)
- support the Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary
- inform and consult with parents about the scheme
- evaluate and review this scheme every two years

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this scheme
- provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the scheme
- with the Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
- assist in implementing reviews of this scheme as detailed in the SIP

Our pupils will:

- be involved in the ongoing development of the scheme and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
- be expected to act in accordance with the scheme

Our parents/carers will:

- be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the ongoing development of the scheme
- have access to the scheme through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
- be encouraged to actively support the scheme
- be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the scheme
- be informed of any incident related to this scheme which could directly affect their child

Our school staff will:

- be involved in the ongoing development of the scheme
- be fully aware of the Equality Scheme and how it relates to them
- understand that this is a whole school issue and support the Equality Scheme
- make known any queries or training requirements

Impact assessments

St Michael's is keen to ensure that none of its policies and practices disadvantage people by disability, race or gender. Impact assessment in all areas will not be possible immediately. All existing policies and practices will be reviewed in accordance with the existing timetable.

When creating new policies or carrying out reviews of existing policies, the school will alter or amend proposed policies where necessary so that they promote equality and eliminate discrimination.. The school will also identify actions arising from the policy which need to be added to the Action Plan.

(Further information about impact assessments can be found in Appendix C)

In addition, we know our school well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this.

OfSTED inspectors visit us regularly and report on equality issues during our inspection. We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, disability and gender. Our action plan directly reflects this consultation.

We also complete a Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) which means we are constantly monitoring the make-up and needs of our staff and pupils and assessing how well we are meeting those needs.

We also value more qualitative information which may be given to us through pupil/learner voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously.

The local authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

We have established good links with our local and our wider community. We welcome them into our school. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school.

By listening to those within our community and to our partners, we are able to identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches and focus our energy where it is required.

Commissioned services (procurement)

Increasingly we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services such as maintenance, cleaning and security. We work closely with the local authority on procurement to ensure that equality issues are given full regard. When procuring goods and services from external suppliers, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community?
- If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?

We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

Our Staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) from discrimination on the grounds of gender, transsexual status, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. 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.

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.

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.

Responding to equality-related incidents

We recognise that prejudice-driven harassment or bullying behaviour is underpinned 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, ageism or sexism. 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 to understand better the diversity that exists in society. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore the subtleties and complexities 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 and collate information about all incidents and will report as required to the local authority and external agencies in line with the county-wide *Hate Crime Reporting Process*. We and the County Council 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.

Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

This scheme was published in April 2010. It will be actively promoted and disseminated via the School Council, the weekly newsletter to parents as well as published on the school website.

Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our governors who have agreed and published this scheme which sets out our priorities and supports these within the detailed action plan.

The scheme will be implemented within three years at which point it will be reviewed and revised appropriately. We will report annually on the scheme and will assess the impact of our actions on improving Equality (and in particular educational outcomes) for all within our school community with particular reference to race and faith, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and age.