

Equal Opportunities Policy

The Equality Act (2010) redefines Equality by bringing together all existing legislation on Equality into a single act. The Equality Act introduced the concept of a Protected Characteristic. This replaces the Equality Strands of previous legislation, by giving legal protection from discrimination on the grounds of the following sets of characteristics:

- Gender
- Marital status and civil partnership
- Pregnancy / maternity
- Transgender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation

Additional responsibilities for public bodies are set out in section 149 of the Equality Act. This places a **general duty** on public bodies when exercising their functions to pay due regard to equality and to meet the three aims of the Equality Act which are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic where these are different from the needs of other people.

- Encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Equality Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

This Equality Policy is intended to respond to the spirit as well as the letter of the Equality Act (2010). The policy recognises that our school has a duty to remove discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, by integrating equality into the school's core priorities and functions.

This Equality Policy will inform our School Development Plan as this will enable us to:

- Demonstrate how promoting equality and eliminating discrimination can help raise standards;
- Ensure that equality and diversity are part of the school's core business both as a school and as an employer;
- Ensure that our priorities for raising standards support our equality objectives.

What do we mean by Equality and Diversity?

Equality refers to outcomes, making sure that all social groups benefit from our activities. Diversity recognises that we can only achieve equality by taking into account the different needs of the population. Equality is impossible to achieve without recognising diversity.

What do we mean by Protected Characteristic?

The Equality Act (2010) introduced the concept of a Protected Characteristic. This is an aspect, or characteristic, of a person's identity that is protected from discrimination. The concept recognises that we are

all individual, however that our individuality is made up of characteristics we share with others. The following are the nine Protected Characteristics recognised by the Equality Act:

- Gender
- Marital status and civil partnership
- Pregnancy / maternity
- Transgender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is a type of negative treatment that affects a whole group of people who share a Protected Characteristic or an individual because they belong to a group. In the Equality Act this is called a Protected Characteristic. Discrimination is shaped by social assumptions that feed into:

- The way people behave towards each other
- The way in which institutions operate

Discrimination gives rise to long term patterns of inequality in terms of:

- Educational attainment
- Employment opportunities
- Distribution of wealth and resources
- Health
- Involvement in the criminal justice system

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than others because of their (real or perceived) ethnicity, disability, age, sexuality, religion/belief or gender.

Indirect discrimination is when there are rules or procedures that have the effect of discrimination against certain groups of people.

What impact have we already had on race equality in our school?

The school curriculum routinely covers topics to address race equality including regular RE lessons and celebrating the culture of children in our school.

The school equips pupils to live in a diverse and multi-ethnic Britain through the curriculum, through visits from faith leaders and parents.

The school welcomes visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds and tries to ensure they are not reinforcing stereotypes.

The school attempts to embed an anti-racist ethos throughout the school.

The school supports pupils who have English as an additional language with planned interventions depending on their academic and social needs.

What is disability and how many disabled people are there in the UK?

Disability is any condition that affects a person in their day to day life. This can happen suddenly, for example as a result of an accident, or gradually as a result of a condition such as arthritis.

In the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) this is called an impairment. The DDA now recognises around 400 impairments including:

- Mobility impairments (requiring aids such as sticks or wheelchairs to move about);
- Sensory impairments (hearing or sight loss);
- Mental ill health (including depression, stress, Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia);
- Cognitive development impairments (including learning disabilities, dyslexia and autism);
- Muscular impairments (including spinal injuries);
- Asthma;

- Cancer;
- HIV/AIDS;
- Phobias;
- Arthritis;
- Acquired brain injuries;

Reasonable adjustments

The school is required to improve access to the curriculum, our buildings and our other services to disabled people. This also means that we need to take a proactive stance and anticipate what we may need in the future for disabled users.

The school's Accessibility Plan attempts to ensure that possible future needs are taken into account and considered whenever modifications to the building are taking place.

Recruitment and Retention of disabled staff

Our school welcomes a diverse workforce and we wish for an ethos where potential and existing staff feel able to disclose any impairment that they have. This is not just for data collection purposes, but in order for the school to make any reasonable adjustments for this member of staff. All disclosures will be treated sensitively and confidently.

Disability and special educational needs

Not all pupils who are defined as disabled will have special educational needs. For example, those with severe asthma or diabetes may not have SEN but may have rights under the DAA. Similarly, not all children with SEN will be defined as having a disability.

What is gender?

Gender refers to the social construction of female and male identity, rather than biological differences between men and women. It includes the ways in which those differences, whether real or perceived, have been valued and used to classify women and men and to assign roles and expectations to them. Gender identity is not always fixed and the Gender

Equality Duty urges us to have due regard to the needs of transgender people.

Gender has a major influence on the ways in which boys and girls perceive themselves in terms of their identities, their aspirations for their future, and their expectations about how people should treat them.

What impact have we already had on gender equality in our school?

The school encourages boys and girls to take part in different sports and clubs during and after-school (whether this be a school club or otherwise). These include choir, arts, cooking and boxing.

Boys and girls are encouraged to develop a diversity of role models.

Sexual Orientation Equality (including transgender)

Approximately 3% of the population are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Developing an inclusive approach to understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment is critical to achieving Equality.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have the same needs as all other young people – they want to feel safe, included and are able to fulfil their potential. The whole school should be involved in creating an atmosphere where everyone feels they can be themselves.

Homophobic Bullying

The most effective way to prevent homophobic bullying and to ensure lesbian, gay and bisexual young feel included and have the information they need to stay safe, is making the curriculum inclusive of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues. This includes circle time, assemblies, and opportunities to discuss different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

What impact have we already had on addressing Sexual Orientation and Equality in our school?

Through sensitive discussions when required, the school endeavours to equip pupils to live in a society that recognises same sex relationships on an equal basis as opposite sex relationships.

The school immediately challenges any discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation.

Age Equality

The Equality Act protects people from unfair treatment on the grounds of age. In terms of the school population, the Equality Act recognises that people aged below 16 can be treated differently and the Act is aimed at unfair treatment that is not justified by the policies of the school. This has particular application to staff employment policies.

There may be cases where a pupil's prime carers are teenagers, young adults or grandparents and that age equality can apply to norms and expectations that parents fit a standardised age group.

Religion / Belief Equality

The Equality Act recognises that Religion and Belief as a Protected Characteristic. Whether a school is denominational or not, every school is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty in terms of its treatment of pupils, families and staff.

All policies need to ensure that they do not treat any person unfairly on the grounds of their Religion and Belief and that where a person belongs to a religious minority, their faith is taken into account.

The policy also needs to treat atheists and agnostics on an equal footing to people who profess a faith.

At this school, Religion and Belief are addressed in a balanced manner in discussions across the curriculum. Alternatives to religion are given fair treatment in the course of class discussions and assemblies. In RE, specific religions are taught in such a way that pupils learn "What it might be like to be... Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist etc" and the day to day life of faith groups, not just the festivals.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The Equality Act recognises that Pregnancy and Maternity is a Protected Characteristic. Every school is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty in terms of its treatments of pupils, families and staff.

It is important to ensure that all policies do not treat any person who is pregnant or who has recently given birth and that the person is not discriminated on those grounds.

In the case of a school, no pupil will be discriminated against purely on the grounds of pregnancy.

Female members of staff are already covered under existing employment legislation.

What are the key issues for our school?

That no student should be discriminated against because she has been pregnant, or if she has given birth and the baby was still born (as long as this was at least 24 weeks before the expected due date). The female student is protected against unfavourable treatment within a 26 week period from the birth of the baby and this includes any discriminatory behaviour because she is breast feeding.

This relate to both direct and indirect discrimination. The main issue is ensuring good communication with our secondary schools to ensure transition is smooth.

What provision do we already have in place for female students who are pregnant or have maternity needs within our school?

Our school ensures that nursing mothers can be accommodated if necessary and we have strong links outside agencies who provide help for new mums.

Good Relations

This has been incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Act as a Duty to Foster Good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and people who do not.

What is meant by good relations?

Good relations between people from different backgrounds exist when:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities;
- The diversity of backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all;
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in school and the community;
- There is a coherent and robust policy on all types of bullying, along with specific measures to address bullying related to identity.

School and their communities

Good community relationships have to be owned by all organisations and community groups if it is to be effective. Schools belong to many different communities. Our school's communities include:

- The school community – our pupils, their families and school staff;
- The local community – our school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in the area;
- The UK community – we are by definition part of this;
- The global community – formed by the EU and international links.

Our school works in partnership with the local community and clubs.

What are the key issues for our school?

Ensuring our pupils and parents have an increasing understanding of the diverse nature of multi-ethnic Britain and the wider world.

What impact have we already had on community cohesion in our school?

Teaching, learning and curriculum

- Promoting shared values;
- Building pupils' understanding of their own identity and the diversity around them;
- Having high expectations of all pupils;
- Skilling pupils to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping.

We do this by:

- Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language;
- Assemblies;
- Involving members from local communities;
- Global citizenship;
- Visits;
- Teaching British Values.

Equity and excellence

- Analysis to identify performance of different groups;
- Removing barriers to access to the school for all groups.

We do this by:

- Behaviour policies;
- Bullying policies;
- Admission policies;

Engagement with extended services

- Building positive relations with different groups;
- Building meaningful partnerships with the local authority, parents, local community groups and voluntary groups.

We do this by:

- Working with the local constabulary and other services e.g. clergy, fire brigade and ambulance service.

This policy was drawn up, discussed and agreed by members of The Viking School. This policy will be reviewed again in two years time.

Signed:

Dated: