



Beacon Hill School **Equality Policy**

Introduction

This policy provides a framework for developing equality within services delivered and within employment.

By putting equal opportunities policies into action we comply with the law and benefit in many areas of our business. When staff are accorded fair treatment motivation increases, a healthy and positive working environment can be maintained and service delivery improved.

The policy applies to all those that come into contact with the School including: -

- Pupils
- Parents
- Users of Portage and Preschool Home Teaching Service.
- Employees
- Potential job applicants
- Contractors and partners and any areas of procurement
- Volunteers

The School aims to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment for reasons relating to: -

- Race, ethnic origin, colour or national origin
- Gender
- Marital status
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability
- Religion or Belief
- Age
- Trade Union Activity or Political Belief
- Social Class
- The rehabilitation of former offenders

Definition:

Equality of opportunity is about eliminating discrimination, promoting fair and equal treatment for everyone and promoting harmonious relations between all sections of the community. This means that employment opportunities and service provisions should be free from irrelevant barriers and accessible to all.

Equality of opportunity involves the recognition and removal of discriminatory barriers, policies, practices and procedures that may be inherent in organisations and individuals. It seeks to replace processes that perpetuate inequality with fairer and more inclusive ways of working.

The School recognises the importance of equality of opportunity within service delivery and employment and is committed to meeting different needs through consultation, review and continuous improvement. This is expressed in our aims

Resources

This policy and future equality work will be monitored and reviewed by the *Governors Curriculum Committee* which will have responsibility for ensuring standards are monitored and adhered to.

We all have a duty to:-

- Comply with and promote the Equality Policy.
- Co-operate with other procedures and practices which complement the Equality Policy.
- Be aware of our behaviour and its impact upon others.
- Report any suspected discriminatory actions.
- Report any suspicions of harassment taking place.
- Not victimise people because they have made a complaint or have been involved in a complaint of harassment or discrimination.
- Seek guidance on matters of equality and best practice when unsure of the appropriate course of action.

Equality Objectives

Service Delivery: -

That the different and diverse pupils at Beacon Hill receive education and services that meet their needs through consultation, review and continuous improvement.

Employment: -

That the different and diverse communities of the area are reflected at all levels of employment within the School and within its partnerships.

Community Cohesion: -

That the people from all involved with the school respect each others cultures and support a positive, ambitious future for the larger community of Beacon Hill.

Consultation

The School recognises that the key to successful policies, procedures and practices is the recognition of the needs of our children and young people, their parents and the workforce. This will be achieved through a range of consultation exercises and a clear consultation strategy. At all times the School will seek to ensure true representation of the school by ensuring information is available in alternative formats and languages and that meetings are held in accessible buildings and at suitable times.

Self-Assessment

The School has a responsibility to find out how it can improve the way it meets the requirements of all children and young people, their parents and employees and ensure that services are relevant to their needs.

Recruitment, Retention and Progression

We are committed to recruiting, retaining and progressing a diverse workforce by:

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- Attracting applicants from all sections of the community
- Advertising in a variety of publications, working with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies to attract under represented groups.
- Role definition and person specifications clearly related to the duties.
- Using and accepting different formats such as large print, tape, disk or email for the recruitment process
- All medical forms will be collated separately to ensure the information is not used in the selection process

- Selection assessments and test will only be used to identify skills required for the position and adjustments will be made where reasonable to accommodate specific needs.
- Appropriately trained staff will conduct interviews and life skills will be valued and the competence gained through these experiences will be balanced against those gained through the more formal route
- Supporting all staff to achieve their potential through the Performance Management process
- Pursuing reasonable adjustments to enable staff who are disabled or have a medical condition to continue in employment
- Training and informing staff of equality issues and expected behaviours
- Ensuring equal pay for work of equal value through job evaluation
- Dealing effectively with incidents of discrimination or harassment

The School recognises that a workforce that broadly reflects the community it serves has a greater understanding and ability to respond to pupils and parents needs.

Monitoring

The School recognises that equality action and progress needs to be monitored and analysed. By this means we will assess the impact of our policies, practices and procedures and where necessary set new targets.

Service Delivery

The School will monitor the use of services to establish that they are providing services fairly to the different sections of the wider community. It will also monitor non-use of services and if barriers to access exist, will aim to adapt existing provision. It will do this through the use of pupil data, parent, staff and governor questionnaires and other similar systems.

Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare

The School recognises its responsibility to provide a safe working environment for all employees. Our policies to support staff will include:-

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct for Workers
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Managing stress in the workplace
- Violence at work
- Allegations against staff policy

Working with Trade Unions

The School recognises that Trade Unions have valuable experiences and contributions to make in the areas of equality through consultation mechanisms and supporting employees who have experienced discriminatory treatment.

Procurement

The School is committed to ensuring equality throughout procurement practices and processes

Complaints

The School encourages everyone to make suggestions to improve its services. Where dissatisfaction exists people are encouraged to raise their complaint through the Complaints Procedure. By this means trends and any equality issues can be identified. Complaints system will be used as part of the monitoring process for service delivery.

Implementing the Legislation

Discrimination

The School recognises that discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfairly or less favourably than another person.

There are four ways that discrimination can occur: -

1. Direct discrimination : when someone is treated less favourably than another because of his or her race, gender, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation, marital status or trade union activity.
2. Indirect discrimination : when a condition or requirement is imposed that has an adverse effect on a group and cannot be justified.
3. Victimisation : when a person who has raised a complaint under one of the Acts and because of this is treated less favourably.
4. Harassment has been defined within the Equal Treatment Directive 2000 as : 'Conduct that violates a person's dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment and may be intentional or unintentional'.

Harassment may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

The School recognises that unlawful discrimination can occur before, during or after the employment relationship. It will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment from Elected Members, employees or the public and will work to improve attitudes and actions. Any incidents will be dealt with through the relevant policies and procedures.

Gender

The School will adhere to the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and associated Codes of Practice to promote equality between male and female employees. All staff will have the opportunity to develop their potential through the Performance Development Review process.

Dependant's Leave

The School will aim to support women and encourage men to have the opportunity to take equal responsibility in family care issues by providing equality in all family friendly and flexible working practices.

Equal Pay

The School believes that men and women should have equality of opportunity within employment and therefore receive equal pay for the same work or work of equal value. The School has started a job evaluation scheme that will grade jobs by assessing the skills and experience required to undertake the duties satisfactorily. Every job will be correctly placed within the structure and an appropriate pay and grading system applied.

Race

The School has produced a Race Equality Scheme that demonstrates our commitment to race equality diversity and enables us to meet our obligations under the Race Relations Amendment 2000 Act.

The School has an up to date racial equality policy and systems to ensure that any instances of racial harassment will be reported through the proper procedures.

The School is aware of the racism and the stereotypical attitudes that many minority ethnic people face. Therefore the School will work to challenge racism and ensure equal access to services and employment regardless of race or ethnic origin.

We will encourage community engagement activities to develop open communication to improve understanding and be more able to meet the needs of black and ethnic minority communities.

Any acts of racial harassment or discrimination by employees will be dealt with and subject to the relevant procedures.

The School is also committed to eliminating institutional racism as defined in Sir William Macpherson's report of 1999 into the investigation into the death of Stephen Lawrence.

He defined institutional racism as:

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.'

Religion and Belief

The community in which we live and work includes people of many religions and beliefs as well as people without a faith. To ensure that we are working to the legislation we will work within ACAS Guidelines and will collect information on the religion of job applicants.

Disability

Disabled people living within North Tyneside have significant experience of the School as customers, service users and employees. It is the intention of the School to eliminate discrimination against disabled people and make sure they have equal access to the high quality services and employment opportunities we aim to provide for all residents, customers and service users.

A person's impairment has previously been seen as the primary cause of disability. However, today it is recognised that it is the way society is organised that creates the barriers that exclude disabled people ; steps and stairs create physical barriers for people with mobility impairments, typed information in small text presents problems for people with sight loss. Both barriers can easily be accommodated by simple adjustments like supplying ramped access to buildings and offering all typed text in larger print.

We recognise and operate within the framework of the Disability Discrimination Act, but also recognise that some individuals are still currently unprotected by the legislation and may face disadvantage and/or segregation. Therefore, the School will seek to support all employees with health conditions or resulting disability whether covered by the Act or not.

Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people

The School recognises that homophobic attitudes and actions that result in discrimination, harassment and violence towards lesbians, gay men and bisexual people still exist. The School also recognises that transgender people face similar attitudes and discriminating behaviour.

The School seeks to challenge and eradicate this type of behaviour by working with partnership organisations to help understand the attitudes and actions that need to be addressed and provide training and guidance to employees.

Age

The legislation will come into force in 2006 and gives improved employment rights to different age groups.

By 2010 it is estimated that there will be more people over the age of 65 years than those under 16 years. The School recognises the significant impact this will have on its employment practices and on the services that it will need to provide.

The Law

The School is committed to work within the current legislation and the Codes of Practice issued by the equality commissions. It recognises the positive duty it is under to promote race equality and anticipates the similar duties that will be forthcoming with regard to gender and disability.

The Equal Pay Act 1970 makes it unlawful to discriminate between men and women in their contracts of employment including pay, holiday entitlement, pension where a man and a woman are doing the same work or equivalent work of equal value.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 protects ex-offenders against discrimination in employment if they do not re-offend during a specific period following conviction.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex or marriage. This Act applies to men, women and children of any age. In 1999 Gender Reassignment Regulations were established to prevent discrimination against transsexual people in pay, employment and vocational training. By 2006 we anticipate a duty to promote gender equality within the public sector.

The Race Relations Act 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, and nationality, ethnic or national origin, including citizenship. This Act covers people from all racial groups, including white people. Since amendments to this Act in 2000 following the inquiry into the handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder, there is now a duty placed on public authorities to promote race equality.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of disability. The Act aims to create an inclusive non-discriminatory environment where disabled people have equal access to goods, services and employment. This Act requires that 'reasonable adjustments' be made to accommodate a disabled employee or service user. By 2006 we anticipate a duty to promote disability equality within the public sector.

The Part-time Workers Regulations 2000 give part-time workers the right not to be treated less favourably than comparable full-time workers.

The Local Government Act 2000 gives residents a bigger part to play in shaping their local communities and gives Local Authorities new discretionary powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

The Employment Act 2002 introduces the rights for eligible employees to request flexible working. It also allows parental leave to enable parents' time off to look after a child or make arrangements for the child's welfare. Parents can use it to spend more time with children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments.

The Employment Equality Regulations, Sexual Orientation 2003 makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment and training on the grounds of sexual orientation. It covers people whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight.

The Employment Equality Regulations, Religion or Belief 2003 makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment and training on the grounds of religion or philosophical belief or lack of such.

Age Discrimination, 2006. Although this will not be legislation until 2006, ability and not age should be the principle within employment issues.