



POLICY STATEMENT

EQUALITY POLICY

Church of England schools are called to follow Jesus' example *to love our neighbour as ourselves*; a Christian understanding of the world calls us to celebrate the individuality and equal value of all humanity. The Church's approach to education is founded on the notion of human flourishing which will be reflected in the everyday life of the school and lived out through the Christian values of love, respect, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice.

The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education believes that Church of England schools and academies and their governing bodies have a significant role to play in addressing inequality in society. Commitment to and promotion of equality is essential to a school's success both in delivering a high quality education for all its pupils and in providing an environment where all pupils and staff can thrive and reach their potential. Church of England schools are rooted in the Christian faith and through their corporate life attempt to glorify God in the development of the full human potential in each person whether pupil, parent, governor or member of staff. Its ethos of love and care and its commitment to justice are the foundation of its aims in educating the whole community to make its proper contribution to society.

All schools are bound by the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 which incorporated previous provisions on gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and age; Church of England schools must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Act, in particular:

- (i) to publish information to show compliance with the equality duty;
- (ii) to publish an accessibility plan; and
- (iii) to publish equality objectives at least every four years which are both specific and measurable and comply with their general duty to:
 - (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
 - (c) foster good relationships between different groups.

The Board believes that equality policies should be developed in consultation with the whole school community and should be based on the following principles:

- 1 All learners are of equal value
- 2 Recognising and respecting difference and celebrating diversity
- 3 Positive attitudes and relationships and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging
- 4 Fairness and justice for all
- 5 Good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development
- 6 Reduction and removal of inequalities and barriers
- 7 High expectations of all

The respective roles of the governing body, headteacher and senior leaders and all staff should be made clear in the policy. Where schools are using the exemptions available to church schools (admissions, staff appointments, acts of worship, RE) this should be mentioned and described in their policy. The Board recommends that this aspect of school life is monitored by a Committee (or different aspects by different committees).

Schools must promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos, deal swiftly with any prejudice-related incidents, plan and deliver a curriculum which reflects the principles listed above and keep up-to-date with equalities legislation as it affects schools. Our schools should be places where all are respected, all achieve and all are treated equally.

Schools are encouraged to make use of positive statements in relation to the recruitment of staff and volunteers such as the example below:

‘(INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL) is committed to positively tackling discrimination in all its forms and works to ensure that all sections of the community have fair and equal access to and experience within employment. We welcome applicants from all backgrounds and communities, in particular those that are currently underrepresented in our workforce; we are respectful of all individuals’ race, age, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, disabilities and cultural background.’

This document is the Board’s own policy statement. Schools must draft, adopt and review their own policy documents. Helpful advice is available in the DfE’s guidance booklet, available on their website, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>.

March 2024 (Schools Committee)

To be reviewed: April 2027