



**St. Cecilia's Catholic Primary School**  
**Equality, Diversity and Accessibility Policy**  
**Policy and Procedures**

Date: Spring 2018



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# **St. Cecilia's Catholic Primary School – Equality, Diversity and Accessibility Policy**

## **School Mission Statement**

*At St Cecilia's School, our aim is to make this a Catholic Christian community and to develop in our children sound Christian principles, through the provision of educational excellence. Such Catholic education is based on the combined relationship of home, parish and school.*

At St Cecilia's

- *We live by God's Word and share His love throughout our school and global family.*
- *We respect and value the contribution that we each make throughout our journey.*
- *We encourage every individual to be an inspired learner for life.*

***This Policy should be read in conjunction with St. Cecilia's School Policies including:***

Admissions,  
Special Educational Needs  
Children with Medical Conditions  
All Safeguarding policies  
Behaviour  
Anti-bullying

## **Rationale**

St Cecilia's school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with Canon Law and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Southwark and at all times the school is to serve as a witness for the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The main reason for adopting an equality policy is to identify, prevent and redress unfair discrimination against disadvantaged individuals and groups. It also covers Community Cohesion as an aim and outcome and replaces previous documentation. As a Catholic school St Cecilia's is committed to ensuring that everybody involved with or part of the school is treated fairly and equally. The school also recognizes that it has to make special efforts to ensure that all individuals and groups prosper.

This Equality Policy for St Cecilia's brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously for Race, Gender, Accessibility and Disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation) as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our school's physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. Our school embraces the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes.

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole school community – pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies - who we have engaged with and who have been actively involved in and contributed to its development.

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization or other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

It explains how we aim to listen to and involve pupils, staff, parents and the community in achieving better outcomes for our children and young people.

### **Our vision statement about Equality, Diversity and Accessibility**

Our core values are derived from our Christian principles where every person is valued as an individual within God's creation. As a school we are committed to demonstrating how, through the work of Catholic education, we are contributing to building up a sense of belonging and responsibility for the whole of the human community within the home and school, local area, Nation and worldwide community. Our vision and values are built around providing a secure, collaborative and purposeful learning culture, where all pupils and staff are valued, cared for, listened to and challenged to be the best they can be. St Cecilia's 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 recognize 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.

### **Overall aims of our Equality, diversity and Accessibility Policy**

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization.
- To carry out our legal duty in complying with the relevant legislation
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within our school and within our wider community.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.
- To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life

### **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. Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. 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 recognize 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 recognize 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 duties**

We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010. We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality and accessibility legislation across all aspects of school life, including the provision of extended services. We will also publish our objectives on an annual basis.

### **The roles and responsibilities within our school community**

Our Headteacher will:

- ensure that inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision
- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students and visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of and informed about the Equality and Accessibility Policy
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and report to the Governing Body at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish our objectives
- ensure that the Senior Leadership team is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it

Our governing body will:

- exercise their duty to serve the common good
- designate a governor with specific responsibility for the Equality and Accessibility Policy
- ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School Improvement Plan
- support the headteacher in implementing any actions necessary
- engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- evaluate and review the policy and the objectives annually

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

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

- assist in implementing reviews of this policy as detailed in the SIP

Our pupils will:

- Be involved in the development of the Policy and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
- Be expected to act in accordance with the Policy
- Be encouraged to actively support the Policy

Our parents/carers will:

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

Our school staff will:

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

Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:

- Be involved in the development of the Policy
- Be encouraged to support the Policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy

### **Providing a model community**

Our educational commitment means that St Cecilia's offers its own vibrant and distinctive Catholic identity that models a community based on Gospel values of justice and peace and is a valid contribution to the rich texture of society. We value, listen to and involve the contribution of every person in the educational community as Children of God with their own distinctive background (ethnic, social class, religious or cultural, academic and personal abilities and giftedness) and invite them to high achievement to the building of the Kingdom of God.

### **Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying**

We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice –based bullying behaviour is driven 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, negative views of disabled people 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 record all hate incidents and prejudice based bullying. We 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.

### **Admissions**

The school follows governing body pupil admission policies that do not permit sex, race, colour or disability to be used as criteria for admission. The school aim is to provide for all pupils according to their needs, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnic origin.

The schools Admission Code 2012 allows schools with a religious character, as designated by the Secretary of State to give priority of admission to pupils who are of that religion. In the Archdiocese of Southwark Guidance on Admissions to Catholic VA Schools and Academies, there is a requirement that baptised Catholic children are given priority in admissions.

### **Curriculum provision**

St Cecilia's ensures pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which avoids stereotypes and provides good role models for all pupils. Equality of opportunity informs the whole curriculum and is reviewed regularly. The school, in its Religious Education, and personal, social and moral education programmes and through cross curricular links, teaches its pupils to be aware of their own identity and their own differences and to treasure the gifts and talents of others. It ensures that pupils are given opportunities to enter into dialogue and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. We introduce pupils to the idea of social harmony and justice and to the diversity of backgrounds within the school, the local area, in the UK and the wider world. It enables our children to appreciate the values that others treasure. In our programme of study in Religious Education we introduce pupils to a study of other world religions.

### **RE and Worship**

The nature of Religious Education and worship in Catholic schools in the Diocese is not determined by the number of Catholic children in the school, but by the Instrument of Government. " (a) religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church: (b) religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church." The religious education schemes in Catholic primary and secondary schools are flexible in being able to take account of and include children from other religions or of no faith background.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. In its worship St Cecilia's enables pupils to understand, appreciate and pray for other people, other cultures, other nations, and especially where they are struggling or in difficulty. Our acts of collective worship leave room for each individual's spiritual identity, their modes of expression and their values.

## **Charity and Social Commitment**

In its work of Christian charity and social concern St Cecilia's is committed to educating its pupils to be actively involved in social justice and charitable action, giving to people in difficulty everywhere. As a school we are committed to working with the local community, other schools, the local authority and agencies, and also in supporting the elderly, the homeless, immigrant groups and all those who feel excluded or marginalized in society. St Cecilia's works to promote peace and justice for all and at every level, and to making its contribution to the local and world community by sharing resources, facilities and playing its part in partnerships, extended schools etc.

## **Employment and the Law**

The governing body is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment for all staff, ensuring that the school takes all possible steps to avoid unlawful discrimination as it relates to its employment practice and the wider school community. St Cecilia's equality policy is intended to assist the school in putting this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not unwittingly commit unlawful acts of discrimination. An important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment at St Cecilia's is striving to ensure that the work environment is free from harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect in keeping with Jesus' teaching and our Gospel values.

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of any of any of the 'protected characteristics' listed above under this policy's rationale. It is expected for all our staff to act in a non-discriminating manner and be mindful to avoid actions that would be deemed as harassment in the services the school provides to the public and the wider community. It is also expected that the school will make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of the services.

The Equality Act 2010 provides for schools with a religious character as designated by the Secretary of State, to appoint staff to schools who are members of the particular religion in accordance with the provisions in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Catholic schools may give preference to the appointment, recruitment or promotion of teachers within the school who are practicing Catholics.

Conduct of any teacher which is incompatible with the precepts of the Catholic Church may be taken into account in determining whether a teacher's employment should be terminated.

The Discrimination on Grounds of Religion or Belief regulations 2003 are reaffirmed in the equality Act 2010. "Where the employer has an ethos based on religion or belief they do not contravene the Act by applying a requirement to be of a particular religion or belief if having regard to the nature of the work it is an occupational requirement and is a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. (schedule 9(3)).

### **Accessibility**

We are committed to taking positive action in the spirit of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to disability and to developing a culture of inclusion, support and awareness within the school. This includes making any reasonable adjustments to the school curriculum and physical environment.

The curriculum includes teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits. It also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum within a reasonable timeframe. The physical environment includes making reasonable adjustments to accessing the school buildings and grounds and adding specialist facilities.

### **Sexual Orientation**

We are all unique, created in God's image and called to work for the common good.

"The Catholic Community includes people of heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual orientation. The human being, whatever his or her sexual orientation, has the right to live and be free from discrimination and harassment. Moreover, people of all sexual orientations have a right to take a full and active part in the life of the Catholic community. Catholic teachings, of course, make a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity, and it holds that all men and women are called to a life of chastity, and to fidelity if they chose to marry. Catholic organizations and institutions ask their members and staff to respect their teaching." (Diversity and Equal Guidelines – Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 2005).

### **Transgender**

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things. The description of someone as transgender refers to their gender identity. Some young people come to realise that their biological gender is not the same as the gender with which they identify, that is, they are born a girl but feel like a boy, or vice versa. As a result they may not conform to accepted gender norms and roles and therefore may experience bullying and should be protected from it. For further advice and practical guidance refer to *Challenging Homophobic Behaviour published by The Education Commission (Sep 2016)*

### **Implementation, monitoring and reviewing**

This policy will be actively promoted and disseminated via the school website, with parents, staff and with the school council

Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our governors who have agreed and published this policy which sets out our priorities and supports these with specific and measurable objectives.

We will report annually on the policy and analyse whether our policy and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular educational outcomes for all within our school community with reference to the protected groups.

### **Equality, Diversity and Accessibility Objectives**

Using the views of pupils, parents, staff and community and analysis of the information as outlined above we have set ourselves specific and measurable objectives that will help us achieve the aims of the general equality duty. These will be reviewed annually and highlighted in the School Improvement Plan.