Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Equal Opportunities Policy

Date reviewed	Next review
March 2025	Spring 2027
Signed (Chair of Governors)	
Margaret McAleese	

Our Lady's School is founded on faith in Jesus Christ and the life of the school community is centred on His presence.

Equal Opportunities Statement of Commitment
The governing board and school is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. We believe that the Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people.

The equality act covers nine protected characteristics, described below. Our Lady's School will make the learning and work environments fair and consistent for all members and ensure that we comply with the law.

The protected characteristics are listed below.

- Age: the Act protects people of all ages.
- Disability: under the Act, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- Gender Reassignment: the Act provides protection for trans-sexual people.
- Marriage and Civil Partnership: the Act protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination.
- Pregnancy and Maternity: a woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled.
- Race: for the purposes of the Act race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.
- Religion or Belief: in the Equality Act, religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion, in other words employees or jobseekers are protected if they do not follow a certain religion or have no religion at all. Additionally, a religion must have a clear structure and belief system.
- Sex: both men and women are protected under the Act.
- Sexual Orientation: the Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

Any behaviour, comments or attitudes that undermine or threaten an individual's self-esteem on these grounds will not be tolerated. We aim to provide equal access to high quality educational opportunities and to ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of the school community. We seek to provide a safe and happy environment where all can flourish and where cultural diversity is celebrated.

We aim to empower our pupils to make informed choices so that they are better prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within their community. Equality of opportunity cannot be realised without the involvement and commitment of all members of the school community and a common understanding of the pivotal role of equal opportunities in the context of the school's ethos and values, in particular, the recognition that the role of all staff is crucial in the delivery of the objectives of the policy.

All members of the school community are responsible for promoting the school's equal opportunities policy and are obliged to respect and act in accordance with the policy.

Aims and objectives

The governing board and school, through its adopted Equal Opportunities Policy, aims to:

- carry out its legal duty in complying with the relevant legislation (including The Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Employment Equality Regulations);
- reinforce the school's position as a provider of high quality education and as a good employer providing development opportunities;
- ensure that equality remains high on the school's strategic agenda;
- establish good people management practice and to set out a proactive agenda in which discrimination is recognised as an organisational issue which needs an organisational response;
- achieve a staffing composition that reflects the composition of the wider community;
- ensure all staff work together with a shared sense of purpose to meet the needs of every pupil;
- ensure that pupils and staff contribute towards a happy and caring environment by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals;
- ensure that complaints or evidence of failure to comply with the school's equal opportunities policy will be dealt with promptly and fully investigated according to the relevant procedure (e.g. complaints relating to staff may be investigated either under the disciplinary, grievance or anti-harassment procedure as appropriate). All forms of discrimination by any person within the school's responsibility will be treated seriously as such behaviour is unacceptable.

Our approach to equality is based on the following key principles.

- We acknowledge that all learners and staff are of equal value whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background, whatever their sexual orientation and whether they have a disability.
- We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.
- We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of our school community to feel a sense of belonging within the school and wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in school life.
- We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
- We have the highest expectations of all our children. We expect that all pupils can make good progress and achieve to their highest potential.
- We work to raise standards for all pupils, especially for the most vulnerable. We believe that improving the quality of education for the most vulnerable groups of pupils raises standards across the whole school.

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone who has *'*a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments and also hidden impairments. In the DDA substantial means more than minor or trivial. Long-term means has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

The definition is broad and includes children with a wide range of impairments, including learning disabilities, dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), diabetes or epilepsy, where the effect of the impairment on the children's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is adverse, substantial and long-term. All those with cancer or surviving cancer; HIV or Multiple Sclerosis are now included from the point of diagnosis.

At Our Lady's School, we are committed to tackling racial discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations. We will continuously strive to ensure that everyone in our school is treated with respect and dignity. Each person in our school will be given fair and equal opportunities to develop their full potential with positive regard to gender, ethnicity, cultural and religious background, sexuality or disability.

We will actively promote race equality and foster positive attitudes. We oppose racism in all its forms including those forms which are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example Islamophobia, and against Travellers, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers.

Policy and planning
Equal opportunities implications, including race equality, will be considered and recorded whenever school policies are developed or reviewed. All policies will be regularly reviewed to provide a comprehensive and consistent process of monitoring and evaluation.

Employment matters
In all staff appointments the best candidate will be appointed based on strictly professional criteria. The school uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as part of its recruitment process to assess applicant's suitability for employment. The school undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a DBS check on the basis of a conviction or other information received.

Family-friendly policies
The governing board is a family-friendly employer and will do its best to respond to the changing needs of all staff by publicising existing schemes designed to support employees in combining work and other responsibilities (parental leave arrangements, job share opportunities, flexitime where appropriate, carers' leave provision).

HIV and AIDS
The governing board recognises that people with HIV or AIDS suffer not only from the purely medical effects of the infection but may also experience prejudice and misunderstanding leading to unfair discrimination and victimisation. The governors therefore will ensure that people with HIV orAIDS do not experience unfair treatment in relation to employment, as pupils or as other members of the school community. The school and governing board will follow the detailed guidelines regarding staff recruitment and pupil admissions set out in Appendix B.

Training and development
The success of the Equal Opportunities Policy is closely linked to the provision of relevant training. Governors will be encouraged to take up all relevant opportunities provided by the Local Authority's Governors Training Programme.
The school will endeavour to:

- enhance and develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of existing employees to realise their full potential, irrespective of background or employment status;
- provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all staff, including part time, on the basis of their assessed training needs;
- promote greater awareness of equal opportunities and the contribution which staff, governors, parents or guardians and pupils can make;
- equip employees with the skills to provide personal and organisational solutions, and to promote anti-discriminatory behaviour generally.

Professional development involves a continuous process of learning involving self-development, encouragement and motivation. The school places great importance on the relationship between team leaders and their teams and will ensure that employees are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own learning and development in the context of the school's performance management system.

Roles and responsibilities
This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved and connected with the school so that each person knows what is expected of them. Promoting equality and raising the achievement of all pupils is the responsibility of the whole school staff.

Introduction to this equality policy will be included in induction arrangements for all staff new to the school. School induction procedures will highlight duties implied by this policy in the same way as child protection, health and safety and behaviour policies form part of the induction process.

<u>Headteacher</u>
The Headteacher will demonstrate, through their personal leadership, the importance of this policy and will ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and understand their role and responsibilities in relation to it. The Headteacher will assess and monitor the impact of the policy and will report outcomes to the Governing Board annually through the safeguarding report. Where additional funding is available for raising the achievement of specific groups of pupils, the Headteacher will ensure that the additional resources are used appropriately and targeted on the basis of identified need and that outcomes are monitored.

<u>Governors</u>
The Governing Board has agreed this scheme and will assess and monitor its impact of the policy.

<u>All staff</u>
All staff will familiarise themselves with this policy and know what their responsibilities are in ensuring that it is implemented. Teachers will know the implications of the scheme for their planning, teaching and learning strategies as well as for behavioural issues.

<u>Pupils</u>
Pupils will be made aware of how the equality policy applies to them. They will learn to treat each other with respect and have the confidence to report incidents of harassment to adults.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers will share in the development of the equality policy and be encouraged to participate fully in implementing it within the school – particularly by reinforcing its ethos at home.

Pupils and the curriculum

The school follows Local Authority (LA) and Governing Board pupil admission policies that do not permit sex, race, colour or disability to be used as criteria for admission. The school's aim is to provide for all pupils according to their needs, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnic origin. The Education Reform Act 1988 stated that *the school curriculum should reflect the culturally diverse society to which pupils belong and of which they will become adult members*. Pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which avoids stereotypes and provides good role models for all pupils.

Equality of opportunity should inform the whole of the curriculum and be reviewed regularly. Equal opportunities issues will be taken account of in planning the curriculum. This should be reflected in curriculum planning documentation.

Internal managerial issues

These guidelines are primarily designed to address employment aspects of governance and management. However, in consulting on the policy and developing it further the Headteacher may wish to take a range of other internal issues into account. Many of the issues listed will already be the subject of detailed agreed policies. It will be helpful to ensure that all existing policies are 'audited' from an equal opportunities perspective

Breaches of the Policy

We expect all members of the school community to be committed to this policy, and that visitors will comply with it. We accept responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in every aspect of school life. If there is a breach of policy, or any incidence of racial harassment or discrimination the school will take appropriate action.

In the case of pupils breaching the policy the perpetrator will be dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and LA guidance and the parents of both parties will be informed. The consequences of any further breach of conduct will be clearly stated with the ultimate sanction of exclusion.

In the case of staff breaching the policy the relevant procedures outlined in the LA staff discipline and grievance policy will also be instigated.

Whistleblowing guidance on safeguarding pupils, including from adult racism, is known to all staff.

In the case of parents, visitors or contractors breaching the policy they will be reminded of the school's commitment to race equality and asked to desist. Further incidents may lead to individuals being requested to leave school premises and in serious cases, police called or notified.

In all cases of discrimination the Headteacher must be informed. The Headteacher or adult dealing with the incident must write a report and complete an Incident Record Form. The Headteacher will submit these to the Local Authority and a copy will be kept in the Headteacher's Behaviour File.

Following the Macpherson Report recommendations, all racist incidents will be reported, even if unwitting or unintentional as these can have a negative cumulative effect on children. However, such incidents will be dealt with sensitivity and common sense with regard for the age and the awareness of the child making a racist remark.

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School has an ethos where children know they are listened to and feel safe to report any act of discrimination and all members of our community know that it has no place here. The Headteacher is also responsible for completing the Monitoring Form for Pattern and Frequency of Racist Incidents and reports on this to Governors and the Local Authority.

If anyone in the school feels that this policy is not being followed then they should raise the matter with the Headteacher who will facilitate the appropriate action, which may include an investigation and report on the issue. If there is a formal complaint then the school's complaints procedure will be used.

Monitoring & review

1. Governors have a duty to ensure that policies are regularly monitored and reviewed. Monitoring is an essential aspect of this policy, as it should provide important information by which the school can measure its performance against its aims and objectives. Statistical information can also enable the governors and Headteacher to detect where potential or actual imbalances exist and to take steps to correct them.
2. Monitoring with respect to employment will be undertaken in the following areas on at least an annual basis by sex, race, disability, grade and subject area:
    - composition of the school staff
    - recruitment trends
    - take up of training opportunities
    - promotion patterns
    - use of complaints procedure
    - use of grievance, disciplinary, harassment etc
    - use of sanctions
    - take-up of family-friendly policies, e.g. flexible working arrangements.
3. Exit interviews can also provide further helpful information and feedback.
4. Governors should ensure that the Equal Opportunities Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

Appendix A: Discrimination, victimisation and harassment

Discrimination on grounds of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, or sexual orientation is illegal. However, for the school community, discrimination is also unacceptable on any of the other grounds referred to in this policy statement. Failure to comply with the policy will be fully and promptly investigated using the appropriate procedures.

There are four ways in which discrimination may occur

1. **Direct discrimination**: This means treating someone less favourably than others would be treated in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of race, sex etc.
2. **Indirect discrimination**: This means applying a requirement or condition which cannot be justified to all groups but which has a disproportionately adverse effect on one group because the proportion of that group which can comply is smaller than the proportion of the group(s) which can comply with it.
3. **Victimisation**: This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than other persons would be treated because that person has done a protected act under the Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act or Employment Equality Regulations, for example, by bringing forward proceedings or giving evidence or information.
4. **Harassment**: Harassment can take many forms, from the most obvious abusive remarks to extremely subtle use of power. As with unfair or unlawful discrimination, harassment can be intentional or unintentional. However, the key issue is not simply the intention of the offender but the impact of the behaviour on the person receiving it.
   Harassment may involve any of the following:
   - physical contact or violence;
   - offensive humiliating and intimidating remarks or actions;
   - exclusion from participation in job-related or classroom-related discussions, training or social or other events;
   - unfair work allocation;
   - unjust or excessive or humiliating criticism of performance;
   - offensive signs or notices;
   - graffiti;
   - repeated demands or requests for sexual favours.

These are merely examples and not an exhaustive list. Whatever the form, the school will provide support for any member of the school community, pupil or staff member who feels threatened or isolated because of such actions.

Appendix B: HIV/AIDS guidelines

The governors and school will:

- ensure that job applicants who are deemed to be medically fit to perform the job for which they have applied, are not denied an offer of work solely because they are HIV positive. In arriving at the decision, the school's normal recruitment criteria will be observed including the normal medical procedures;
- ensure, where possible, that resources are available to support employees or pupils with AIDS or other major health problems associated with HIV infection. The school's normal rules and procedures regarding ill health will apply in such cases. Equally the school will make appropriate arrangements for the provision of counselling (i.e. by referral to external agencies);
- give positive consideration to applications for unpaid leave for those with responsibility for caring for people with AIDS-related conditions in accordance with carers' leave arrangements;
- treat any breaches of confidentiality as a serious matter to be dealt with in accordance with the normal disciplinary (or other appropriate) procedure;
- provide appropriate training in relation to AIDS in order to combat fears and prejudice and to enable the school community as a whole to function without risk to health.