



EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY POLICY

GENERAL STATEMENT

'All different, all equal'

At Plantsbrook School our policy is to promote equality of opportunity for all members of the school community regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, age, disability or ability or of any other specific need they may have.

The way we teach and learn and the way the school is organised should take full account of such a policy. All of us, teaching and support staff, students, governors and parents should be fully aware of our policy and should actively encourage the good practice which must accompany it.

As we have stated in our 'School Aims', at Plantsbrook School we believe that we must all work together in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. We must care for everyone equally. We must be a school in which everyone is an achiever and everyone is made to feel valued. We must prepare students to become responsible citizens, able to take advantage of the opportunities of adult life and respectful of the values and cultures of others.

We must continue to build an environment which takes account of and celebrates diversity. We will continue to tackle discrimination and promote equality.

Above all, Plantsbrook School should be a place in which we all strive to live, learn and work in harmony.

Staff

Recruitment

Staff are a vital resource in any organisation. The way in which staff are recruited and appointed at Plantsbrook should be fair and always encompass equal opportunity procedures. These will be in line with legal requirements as set out in The Equality Act 2010 which now incorporates The Race Relations Act 1976, The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Equal Pay Act 1970, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, The Employment Rights Act 1996, The Employment Relations Act 1999 and the Employment Act 2002, as well as The Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, The Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations, and The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

The staffing structure of the school conveys very important messages to students e.g. about the relative power positions of men and women and the appropriateness of various areas of work for both sexes. Whilst in all appointments (teaching and support) the best candidate should be chosen for the job, consideration should be given to developing a staff body which represents a range of backgrounds.

Where there is a lack of positive role models for a particular group within the school, it may be necessary to invite other adults into school to fulfil this need.

Training

All staff (teaching and support) should have equal access to in-service training and to advice on career development.

INSET on Equality of Opportunity issues and awareness raising sessions must take place at a whole school level. Ensuring equality of opportunity should also be a topic for discussion at departmental meetings.

There is a named Senior Member of staff with responsibility for Equality of Opportunity. At present this is Ms Campbell. A Governor with specific responsibility for Equality of Opportunity has been named. This is currently Mr Gwyllym Blackman.

Students

Admissions and Attendance

We take steps to ensure that the admissions process is fair and equitable to all pupils. The school monitors attendance by gender and ethnicity and uses data to develop strategies to address poor attendance.

Students should be made aware of the Equality of Opportunity Policy. They have contributed to its development via School Council. Students have written a pupil-friendly version of this policy which is displayed around school.

Behaviour

Good student behaviour is promoted via our 'Whole School Behaviour Policy'. The 'Responsibilities and Rights' section refers explicitly to the issues of respect and equality and the bullying policy provides useful advice.

We recognise that by behaving inappropriately, some students take and receive a disproportionate amount of teachers' time. Procedures for dealing with poor behaviour are outlined in the 'Whole School Behaviour Policy'. At the same time we are working hard to ensure that all students receive their share of individual attention.

Racist and sexist abuse can take both physical and verbal forms. Verbal attacks such as name-calling and racist or sexist jokes undermine and demean individuals. No member of staff should ignore such incidents. Steps should be taken to explain fully to those perpetrating this behaviour that abuse will not be tolerated. Support should be provided for those involved. The pastoral curriculum empowers students to deal effectively and assertively with such incidents. Attempts are made to reduce feelings of intimidation as students move around the school or in the playground. There are quiet areas where students can go at break and lunchtimes.

Details of serious incidents should be passed to the named Senior Member of staff with responsibility for Equality of Opportunity, via Achievement Co-ordinators. The details will be entered in the Equal Opportunities Log Book for monitoring purposes.

We ensure that exclusion meetings are fair to each student and we follow the procedures as laid down by the LA. Families are encouraged to bring a representative of their choice who can speak for them if they wish. Exclusion figures are monitored to ensure that our procedures are fair.

Names

Students can be demeaned and made to feel insecure by improper pronunciation of their names and incorrect spellings in the register. We must try to ensure that this does not happen.

Teachers need to be sensitive to different naming traditions and should encourage students to respect and accept names from cultures other than their own. Information on naming traditions is available from the named Senior Member of staff with responsibility for Equality of Opportunity.

Curriculum

The curriculum can be a potent force for both perpetuating discriminatory attitudes and for combating them. At Plantsbrook we will work to ensure that the latter is the case through the formal curriculum, whole school policies, separate subject schemes of work, the tutorial programme and the hidden curriculum. We monitor pupils' attainment and progress across the school and in individual subjects and compare the performance of different individuals and different groups. We take action if we spot disparities.

Access

All students are entitled to equal access to the curriculum. All students must be encouraged to make the most of their opportunities at school regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, age or ability or of any other specific need they may have.

Extra-curricular activities should be open to all students. Where particular groups are under represented, it may be necessary actively to encourage their participation.

As far as possible we challenge stereotyping in Post 16 choices. Pupils are encouraged to make non-traditional choices. We take steps to ensure there is no discrimination on work experience.

Classroom Practice

Our principal aim is to enable all of our students to achieve to the best of their ability in as many areas as possible. We must recognise and reward each student's progress. Our Rewards Policy explicitly states this. We value and aim to make sensitive use of students' own knowledge, culture and experience in our teaching. Wherever possible we aim to celebrate cultural and racial diversity through the curriculum.

Departments should aim to use a variety of different teaching styles and assessment techniques so that all students have the opportunity to learn and to be assessed in a way which is most appropriate to their needs. We use assessment outcomes to identify the specific needs of any pupils who may be underachieving.

Teachers should be sensitive when grouping students. For example, sometimes it may be desirable to have mixed ability, mixed gender or mixed friendship groups for particular activities; at other times it may not. Departments should be aware of Equal Opportunities issues when setting students. We must not limit students' chances of success by placing them in a set which is inappropriate for their level of ability in that particular subject.

We will try to ensure that resources and displays do not perpetuate stereotypes but rather we will aim to encourage students to develop the skills and confidence to recognise bias. Active steps will be taken to use and produce materials which present positive images of a whole range of groups.

Departments will be encouraged to review and develop Equal Opportunities statements within their documentation.

The pastoral curriculum deals explicitly with many issues related to Equal Opportunities. Quality Careers Education, for example, is an important way of raising aspirations and thus 'opening doors' for our students. We strive to challenge stereotypes in employment through this programme.

The Hidden Curriculum

We must be aware that our actions, what we say and how we say it convey messages to our students. This is known as the hidden curriculum. Tasks around school should not be allocated on the grounds of gender or ethnicity. We must make an effort not to use language or terms which discriminate against individuals or a particular group.

Our assembly themes support the principles of Equal Opportunities. Assemblies can be used to acknowledge and celebrate diversity. They can also be a forum for highlighting the fact that discrimination will not be tolerated. Student participation in assemblies should be encouraged wherever possible.

Language

When linguistic diversity is valued, bilingualism is viewed as a strength. Developing bilingual students are supported in a variety of ways, including through our Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). Our aim is to make sure that all students are able to take advantage of their educational opportunities.

Parents and the Local Community

Parents should be informed of the existence of this policy and will be asked to contribute to its development where possible. Our policy is to regularly inform all parents of their child's progress.

By bringing a range of people in to school from the local community we will actively challenge stereotypes and promote positive role models for our students.

Governors

'It is against the law for Governors to discriminate against the children applying to be admitted, pupils, job applicants or staff because of their sex, marital status, race, colour, nationality, age or ethnic origins' (School Governors - A Guide to the Law 1994).

When renewing all school policies, Governors will bear in mind this policy.

The Governing Body composition should be seen to be inclusive and a balanced membership, representative of the school's population and of the local community, should be considered when co-opting new Governors. All governors should have equal access to training.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A variety of performance indicators will be analysed by gender, ethnicity and disability and any issues raised will be addressed. Indicators will include examination and assessment results, staffing profiles, exclusions, attendance figures and career destinations. The number of incidents of harassment will also be logged.

This policy will be regularly reviewed and a report will be given annually to Governors on progress.

Students' views are sought via the School Council and through questionnaires. Parents will be consulted where appropriate.

This policy was developed over the course of a year by members of the Equal Opportunities Working Group, staff, Governors, students and parents. It is designed to support Birmingham Local Authority's policies on Equal Opportunities and is consistent with all of our other policies.

Appendix A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Equality is a term used in this policy to reflect the view that all people are of equal value and positive action is taken to ensure that unjustifiable obstacles to equal opportunity and access are identified and removed. "Equal treatment" does not necessarily mean "the same treatment".

Discrimination is the treatment of one person or groups of people less favourably than another. Direct discrimination is when someone is treated less favourably because they are, or are perceived to be, a member of a particular group. Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition is applied to everyone but is such that a smaller proportion of a particular group can comply with it than others.

Gender can be defined as the socially or culturally defined differences ascribed to females and males. People are born with sex differences but learn gender differences.

Sexuality means having sexual needs or desires of a particular kind.

Disability usually applies to people who are physically or mentally disadvantaged e.g. hearing impaired, visually impaired, people in wheelchairs, people with speech impediments, and certain medical conditions.

Inclusivity - Any pupil may have a Special Educational Need for part or all of their school career. Their need may require learning support, language development or additional social/emotional education. The term applies to children of all abilities.

Ethnicity is legally defined as belonging to an "ethnic group" which regards itself, and must be regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of two essential characteristics: a long shared history and a cultural tradition of its own. Individuals have the right to define their own identity, cultural or otherwise.

Race is a concept used to classify humankind according to common ancestry or descent, usually on the grounds of physical appearance.

Culture refers to the system of religious and other beliefs, assumptions, sentiments and perspectives which members of a group have in common. Every individual may participate in a variety of different cultures so most cultural groups are in a state of change.

Dual Heritage is the accepted term to describe the ethnicity of a person born to parents from different ethnic groups. 'Mixed race' can also be used. (The term 'half-caste' is not acceptable).

Black is the term favoured in this country by most African-Caribbean and African peoples to describe their ethnicity. ('Coloured' is not acceptable).