



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

- Race
- Gender
- Disability

Reviewed by Governors People Committee June 2013  
To be reviewed June 2015

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other College policies. It is important that this policy is written to comply with data protection issues.

***"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit: and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord: and there are varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in every way". (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)***

**Therefore**

***".....forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God; design". (Vatican 11 Gaudium et Spes, n 29).***

The Governors and staff of St. Joseph's College are committed to the principle of Equal Opportunities embodied in the above statement and in the goal of the College which stresses the right of every individual within the College community to be given full and equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

We acknowledge that racism, sexism and others forms of inequality exist within society at large and within the local community and therefore inevitably, at times, may manifest themselves in St. Joseph's College.

Therefore we have to take positive steps to guard against racism, sexism and all forms of inequality which spring from differences of race, culture, gender, ability level or disability, language, sexual identity, religion and class in order to enable everyone within the College to fulfil their potential.

It shall be our policy to constantly endeavour to eradicate all forms of inequality and to ensure equality or opportunity for all. In order to do this we need to provide a curriculum to which all our students have access and a working environment which is free from discrimination in which everyone feels valued and secure. The fundamental principle underlying this should be that we ".....live out, in day-to-day life, the conviction of the equal dignity of all". (*Pontifical Commission "Iustitia ex Pax"*, n.24).

We recognise that, in order to eradicate inequality, everyone needs to understand its nature and causes. This is particularly true of sexism and racism, all forms of which the Church strongly condemns, and to which, as a School Community, we are totally opposed.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

As far as schools are concerned, for the most part, the effect of the new law is the same as it has been in the past – meaning that schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Protection is now extended to pupils who are pregnant or undergoing gender reassignment. However, schools that are already complying with the law should not find major differences in what they need to do.

The exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools that existed under previous legislation – such as the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single-sex schools and schools of a religious character, are all replicated in the new act.

## **RACISM**

Racism stems from notions of racial superiority and inferiority. These notions lead to prejudice and discrimination, and, where they are deeply embedded in a culture and developed over centuries, racism takes many forms. There is structural racism around the world where ethnic minority groups and individuals are denied access to key positions in their society; overt racism involving abuse and attacks; unintentional racism which claims that there is no difference between people and therefore fails to recognise the value of the different languages and cultures that others bring to the society.

*“It is important to recognise the diversity and complementarity of one another’s cultural riches” (Pontifical Commission “Iusticia et Pax”, n.23).*

Unintentional racism may also occur when a well-intentioned person, as a result of his or her education and experiences, may have negative, patronising or stereotyped views about ethnic minorities which may subconsciously affect their attitude and behaviour towards people of a different race.

Whilst we acknowledge that many may be victims of racism we recognise that some people are obvious targets because of their skin colour. We strongly condemn all forms of racism, structural, overt and unconscious and recognise that as a School Community we are uniquely placed to educate young people about the evils of racism and prejudice within a school ethos which is free of racism and which ensures that each individual is equipped to play a full part in our multi-cultural society as a young adult.

*"The Gospel itself leaves us in no doubt that our belief in its values should place us in the forefront of the movement for racial justice and harmony, not in the rear".*

(Statement from the Bishops of the Diocese of Westminster to Governing bodies and teachers in Catholic schools, 1992)

### **SEXISM**

*"No inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex should exist". (Lumen Gentium, n.32).*

Sexism means treating people differently depending on whether they are male or female and developing fixed ideas about people, simply according to which sex they are. This process of sex stereotyping leads some people to conform to gender roles which can inhibit an individual's abilities, preferences and aspirations. Sexism stems from the belief that one sex is superior to the other and hence to prejudice and/or discrimination in assumptions and actions (traditionally this has been the belief that men are superior to women). Sexism is harmful because it casts individuals in stereotyped roles and denies equality of treatment and opportunity e.g. "five strong boys to move these tables", "girls can't play football", "don't be a cissy, big boys don't cry". Sexism can limit horizons and restrict choices, thus disadvantaging both sexes. We therefore consider sexism to be incompatible with good educational practice; it being clearly contradictory to the teachings of the Church (*ibid*) and we believe that the school must ensure that all areas of school life both promote sexual equality and challenge sexism.

### **DISABILITY**

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

(Meanings of terms: 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial - eg it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed, 'long-term' means 12 months or more - eg a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection )

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Act 2001 in that all students in the College have access to the curriculum.

A survey by Croydon Health Authority has noted that despite many recent positive developments major structural changes to the building are not practical for financial reasons, although any new build takes accounts of the Act.

## **EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

*Statement from the Bishops of the Diocese of Westminster to all Governing bodies and teachers in catholic schools of the diocese-*

"The Bishops Conference of England and Wales in 1979 observed that "Through a long a constant process Britain has become irreversibly a multiracial, multicultural society". In no part of the country is this more true than within our own Diocese of Westminster. From time immemorial, groups from all parts of Europe and the nations of the world have come to settle in London, bringing with them all that is most precious, their families, their customs, and their way of life. Within the Church this diversity is not a basis for division but the underlying and over-riding principal of our faith in Jesus Christ that binds us together in a unifying brotherhood of understanding, love and mutual enrichment".

*"You are, all of you, children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourself in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus". Galations 3: 26-29.*

The Gospel itself leaves us in no doubt, that our belief in its values should place us in the forefront of the movement for racial justice and harmony, not in the rear.

There are many examples of good practice within our schools, which may be held up as examples of Christian inspiration; it is also regrettably true that there are others where a lack of awareness or an inability to address the issues concerned, give the appearance that the Catholic community is indifferent to the needs of the weakest and most vulnerable of their brethren.

Each school needs to take positive steps to examine its practice in this matter. Otherwise, it is all too easy to fall into a type of "racism by default"; the unspoken assumption is made that all pupils in the school share the same background and culture. When this assumption permeates the curriculum and organisation of the school, alienation and disaffection readily set in among pupils of minority ethnic groups.

The Bishops therefore wish to set out the following guiding principles for all the schools of the Diocese, which should be carefully considered by Governors, parents and members of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

1. All men and women are of equal importance in the sight of God and should be equally accorded the respect and dignity due to the children of God.
2. It follows that the diversity resulting from age, gender, racial and social origins, culture and practice should be regarded as enriching the total Catholic community and not creating any order of esteem.

3. Consequently all the members of the community whatever their function, status or ability shall be held in equal esteem.
4. No person should be recruited to the service of a Catholic school unless he or she is fully aware of the aims and objectives of the Church and of the school in seeking to implement them.
5. It is appreciated that teachers and other employees who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church give most loyal and valuable service to Catholic schools, nonetheless in the first instance every effort should be made to recruit committed and practising Catholics, where vacancies exist.
6. Age, sex, ethnic origin, disability, married or single status shall not be a consideration in the recruitment of staff, but simply the matter of qualification, experience and suitability to the proper discharge of relevant duties.
7. Children who are admitted to the school and their families must be fully aware of the aims and objectives of the Church and school and undertake to support them. This requirement must be considered in the light of the prescription of the law and incorporated in the criteria for admissions.
8. Every child is to be held in equal esteem as a child of God. Their individual needs are to be carefully assessed and monitored in the light of their abilities, talents, previous and present experience and their full and appropriate entitlement to educational and spiritual provision made available to them.
9. The overall structures and policies, as indeed the class and departmental structures and attitudes are to be evaluated and kept under constant review in order to see that no individual adult or child is subject in any way to prejudice or discrimination in terms of their membership of the school community.
10. The Catholic Church is uniquely placed to promote racial harmony among the people of God, who freely share a common baptism and are nourished by the same Eucharist. Schools should positively reflect this harmony within their communities and promote it by the following means:-
  - a) By joining together frequently in the celebration of the Eucharist.
  - b) By preaching the principles of Christ's Gospel and observing them in the conduct of the school.
  - c) By being alert to any incidence of racial prejudice by pupils or others.
  - d) By ensuring that teaching materials do not themselves communicate racial prejudice or attitudes.
  - e) By encouraging a pride in and a sharing of national customs and practice.
  - f) By ensuring the whole curriculum is available to every pupil.
  - g) By using material available from different national origins and histories to ensure an awareness of a whole-world curriculum.
  - h) By encouraging pupils to benefit from the culture and practice of other nations.
  - i) By preparing pupils to take their place in a multicultural and multiracial society.
  - j) By confirming the Christian message of equality of all in the sight of God and the obligation of support to those of the community who are weakest and most in need.

# **PRACTICE**

As a Catholic School, St. Joseph's is committed to equality of opportunity for all, regardless of race, nationality, colour, ethnic or national origin, we support the declaration of the Vatican II Council that "the Church repudiates as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, colour, condition in life or religion". (*Nostra Aetate, Oct 1965*)

St. Joseph's College pledges itself to be a place where pupils of all races, religions, gender, abilities and social circumstances will find security and respect for themselves, their families, other people and their traditions.

## **School Commitment**

In accordance with its commitment to Equal Opportunities, the school is committed to preventing discrimination and to promoting both equality of opportunity and good relations between staff, students and parents and also in its dealings with the wider community. The commitment means that all staff, students, parents and visitors to the school should receive fair and equitable treatment that is not dependent upon their race.

## **Employment Policies**

The College will ensure that its policies and/or practices in the following areas are designed to ensure that no discrimination, either direct or indirect take place:

- Recruitment, selection and appointment
- Promotion
- Harassment
- Disciplinary

In addition it will ensure that staff have access to appropriate training to help them fulfil their duties under the Equality Act.

## **Admission Policy**

The College will ensure that its policy for Admissions is designed to ensure that no racial discrimination, either direct or indirect takes place.

## **Curriculum Policies**

When devising and reviewing the curriculum, staff should ensure that it is designed to be responsible to the needs and values of different ethnic and racial groups and traditions and of those with English as an additional language (EAL).

The promotion of equality will be considered for each curriculum area as it is revisited in line with the School Development Plan (SDP)

## **Responsibilities**

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy as follows:-

- The Headteacher and Governors are responsible for ensuring that all activities within their remits are reviewed to ensure that they are in keeping with the school's commitment to promote racial equality, making amendments as appropriate.
- The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all staff have access to appropriate training in the promotion of equality.
- The Subject Co-ordinators should ensure that each curriculum area is developed in a culturally sensitive way, which promotes equality, avoids stereotypes, and prepares children for life in a multi-ethnic society.
- The Governing Body will be responsible for the regular review of employment policies/practices.

### **Monitoring**

The monitoring by the People and Curriculum Committees of the Governing Body will comprise:

- A review of curriculum policy development
- A review of the analysis of pupil data from the perspective of the ethnicity
- The monitoring of exclusions
- The monitoring of identified racial incidents

Monitoring will also be undertaken by school staff during:

- Observation of teaching
- Scrutiny of work
- Logging of accidents/incidents
- Pupil participation in the wider life of the school

### **Promoting Racial Equality in the wider community**

The school will seek to promote racial equality in the wider community by:

- Dialogue between home and school
- Dialogue with local parishes, to include local Justice and Peace representatives
- Liaison with the Borough co-ordinator for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Liaison with LEA support staff for pupils with EAL
- Liaison with the Diocese, to include the Justice and Peace Commission.

### **References:**

*The Commission for Racial Equality [www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)*

*The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000)*

*Serving a Multi-Ethnic Society ( Published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 1999)  
Vatican II documents*