

Promoting Equal Opportunities Policy

The Bellbird Primary School



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“What is “Equal Opportunity?”

Equal Opportunities at school is about ensuring that all children and adults have equality of opportunity in terms of access and outcome throughout all aspects of school like and that their life chances for the present and future are not impeded or distorted by anything that happens during their participation in the process of education, but are in fact widened to allow them to achieve the whole scope of their potential. It is important to note that equal access does not necessarily lead to equality of outcome.

Equal opportunity recognises and celebrates our similarities and our diversity as individuals and groups. It recognises that all individuals have an intrinsic right to be nurtured in such a way as they are able to reach their full potential.

Equal opportunity accepts that while we all have something of value to contribute, we do not all start on a level playing field. Consequently, some individuals will be disadvantaged in their attempts to reach their potential. We as an organisation will work hard to differentiate and maximise their personal achievement.

Issues of equality are applicable to us all, but there are a number of people about whom Equal Opportunity concerns are often more formally expressed. Such groups are often referred to in terms of race, gender, sex and disability or with reference to their age, class, religion or educational achievement. These terms in themselves may be problematic in that they are social constructs (“man-made”), but they may also have use as frames of reference.

Equal Opportunities covers the whole process of education but particularly embraces issues of multiculturalism, anti-racism, disability, ethnicity, gender and trans-gender, sexuality, and socio-economic disadvantage. Strategies to combat inequality include those dealing with issues of self-esteem and sense of self-worth, school organisation, curriculum content and delivery, discipline, provision for those considered to have special educational and or English as an additional language needs, underachievement, and building social relationships within the school community. Equal opportunity is about creating the structures and contexts for unlocking potential.

On 1 October 2010 new equality legislation came into force. The Equality Act 2010 has replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act, and Sex Discrimination Act. This means that three equality duties schools are familiar with (Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality) have been replaced by a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force on 6 April 2011.

Under the PSED, schools must show **due regard** to the general duty and its three “components” as well as complying with a set of specifications. The three components to the PSED are:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

This means that schools are still required to take proactive steps to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Explicit incidents which contribute to inequality include racism, sexism, classicism or any kind of discrimination. Physical violence, verbal abuse, insults, name calling, jokes / ridicule, threats, bullying and graffiti are some of the manifestations of this. Any such undermining of a person’s sense of worth or self-esteem is unacceptable.

The school has a legal duty to implement and monitor an equal opportunities policy, and this is our latest update. The Bellbird is proud of its excellent record of harmony, showcased by our zero permanent exclusion and very low general exclusion, bullying and racist incident record.

The School Ethos and Hidden Curriculum

We recognise that the overall ethos and climate of the school contributes to what our children learn from us in school; that children pick up on the values and expectation we promote. It could be said that children learn as much from the subtle „little things“ that go on, all the hidden messages that are so powerful (the hidden curriculum) – as in their formal lessons.

Consequently, we use our school ethos as a means to promote equality and self-worth. One example of this is with our behaviour policy and how it is applied.

We will endeavour to create and maintain a school ethos which is welcoming, reflective of the diverse multicultural society around us, fosters a sense of wellbeing, confidence and security; that affirms individual identity and demonstrates respect for each other; that ensures time and space for each individual; that challenges and expands horizons and encourages confidence, independence, cooperation and participation.

In order to achieve this, we will: -

- Always challenge in an open and frank manner, behaviour and language which threaten the promotion of equal opportunities and take time to discuss with children the negative and damaging effect it has.
- Take the opportunity to use display space and assembly time to promote issues of equality, and self-esteem.
- Implement praise, reward, criticism and punishment with due consideration for equality. Equal opportunity demands a right to an equal response and outcome to a situation whether the child is a boy or a girl. (Research shows that boys receive more criticism and praise than girls.)
- Encourage a climate of openness where children feel safe and confident to raise issues of concern to them, bullying, racism, e – safety, taunting etc., and where the school can place a positive influence on discussion and events.
- Be sensitive to the needs of all individuals; recognizing each in his or her own right, and without placing labels on individuals or groups of children. This includes a commitment to offer time to each individual and ensure that individual or group needs are met.
- Be aware of the power of language as a tool which can promote equality or perpetuate inequality.
- Children, too, need to be made aware of their language use and its implications. In addition, they also need to be made aware of their part in promoting positive relationships and the ethos of the school.
- Encourage high aspirations and a skill set for a global citizenship by offering a range of opportunities and experiences to broaden and raise personal expectations as much as possible.

What the child brings from home is important. In promoting equality of opportunity, we may be asking children to explore some of these values, attitudes and behaviours. We need to be sensitive so as not to damage self – esteem.

Resources

Care will be taken with the purchase of new material to ensure resources promote positive images and avoid stereotyping. Please be aware that books which display sexism, negative images or stereotyping may have a planned place in our curriculum as a tool for discussion with the children in order to promote a positive understanding of the surrounding issues.

Resources, including books, need to be presented as sources of evidence, which need to be interpreted, questioned and evaluated, rather than authorities which are hardened statements of fact.

School Organisation

While, at times we will need to use commonly prescribed social categories to group children we will monitor our use of this to ensure we do not place definitions or labels on children needlessly.

A careful consideration of the ways in which we group children and give them access to the curriculum will be made as we plan, and on a day-to-day basis, in order to ensure that classroom organisation, teaching styles and learning opportunities offer all children an equal chance to succeed. Where appropriate, we will give children experiences and opportunities to operate outside the constraints of wider social stereotypes and modes of behaviour.

Careful attention will be given to teacher exposition, facilitating discussion and questioning techniques to ensure equal demands are made of both sexes, all ethnic groups and intellectual abilities. Similarly, care will be taken in allocating teacher-spent time amongst all the children in class.

Assessment recording and monitoring

All staff share a responsibility for monitoring and effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy and reporting concerns to senior staff.

Subject managers will monitor their subjects to ensure the taught curriculum, resources, assessment procedures and learning outcomes ensure equality of opportunity for the whole school community.

The Head teacher holds specific responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy in conjunction with senior staff.

Policy for Sex and Gender Equality

Aims

To ensure no discrimination takes place at The Bellbird Primary School on the grounds of gender, transgender or sexual orientation.

To create a school community in which men and women, boys and girls from all faiths and cultures are valued equally, while their different backgrounds, experiences and needs are respected.

To establish an ethos of equality, and adopt strategies to achieve equality of opportunity for both sexes.

Rationale

In our society a large number of differences which have been conventionally associated with sex are actually socially constructed and are maintained through social pressure. Sexism is the term used to describe discrimination on the basis of gender; where the operation of forces in society, (beliefs, attitudes, behaviours) can allot benefits and privileges, as well as curb and limit preferences and opportunities, on the basis of a person's gender rather than on the basis of inclination or ability. Sexism and gender stereotyping can be offensive and is equally damaging to boys and girls. Conforming to gender roles can inhibit the abilities, performance and aspirations of both boys and girls by restricting their choices.

Our school is committed to sexual equality and seeks to counter sexism and gender/ transgender or sexuality stereotyping in order to extend the choices and horizons of all staff and children so that they can discover who they are, what they like doing and achieve their full potential at whatever they attempt.

In order to achieve this, we will employ the following strategies:

- Boys and girls will have access to the full range of educational activities and equal entitlement to all resources.
- Raise awareness amongst the staff of the dangers of gender role stereotyping and of procedures and principles to counter it.
- Encourage all children to extend their horizons and make children aware of all the opportunities available to them.
- Recognise that access itself will not lead to equality: we may need to intervene strongly. For example, some girls given the opportunity to build with construction kits may not succeed with them to their full potential unless they are actively taught how to use them – a procedure with which many boys may already be very familiar.
- Monitor the use of school equipment in terms of access, time available and teaching (Research shows that boys demand and receive more of a teacher's time than girls).
- Use positive role models and ensure the achievements and contributions of both men and women throughout history, art, literature and science are incorporated appropriately into the curriculum. It needs to be presented as a natural part of the curriculum and not an appendage.
- Teachers have equally high expectations of both boys and girls.
- Be aware of word use, the power of language and its implications; for example, „policeman“ or „good girl“.
- Use, where appropriate, discussion, drama, role play to explore different roles: empathy and understanding of others.
- Build in activities to the curriculum which challenge limiting assumptions, extend horizons and explore new avenues of thought. For example, write a fairy story with characters who have stepped outside of their stereotyped role; active, strong clever princesses.
- Make equal demands on both sexes, for example during discussion and class questioning.
- Challenge inappropriate stereotypes, sexist comment and inappropriate statements about sex roles: for example, “boys are better at...”
- Ensure school texts and resources do not promote sex stereotyping. We recognise the more than occasional limitations of commercial material and budget limitations but will actively endeavour to purchase material which promotes positive role models for both sexes.

- If stereotyped images or comments do occur in curriculum materials, e.g. fiction books they should be discussed with the children.
- Ensure staff are seen as positive role models.
- Ensure we employ the very best available staff for all roles in school regardless of their gender (or transgender) and / or sexuality.
- Monitor our own practice, beliefs and expectations through self-evaluation. Do we expect girls to be more.....?
- Consider carefully, and act on, equality issues in the organisation and management of learning. We recognise that the achievement of equality will be complex and subtle.

Equalities Policy: Anti-Racist Policy

Aims

- Provide a curriculum which emphasises respect and understanding of all cultures and religions.
- Provide a curriculum which enables children to develop skills to recognise and challenge inequality.
- Ensure a consistent approach to tackle racism in all its forms and manage racist incidents.

Rationale

Racism refers to the consequence of placing social significance in concepts of race which have as their outcome the disadvantage of individuals and groups.

Racism may be exhibited in many forms including physical assault, derogatory name calling, verbal abuse, insults, jokes, graffiti, provocative behaviour, (including wearing badges or bringing literature to school,) ridicule of an individual for cultural or religious difference and refusal to co-operate with others because of their ethnic origins.

Racism includes all practices and procedures that discriminate against people because of their race, colour, culture, nationality and national or ethnic origins (including religion and language) whether on an individual, institutional or cultural level. Discrimination is defined as action or behaviour which disadvantages a group of people.

Racism can take many forms from direct harassment (e.g. racist name calling or physical bullying) to indirect and institutional racism (e.g.

discriminatory admissions criteria and allocation to teaching groups). Racism can occur between any ethnic group.

Racism has a long history affecting millions of people. People are seriously harmed and injured by it. The law recognises the seriousness of racism by requiring that courts should impose higher sentences when an offence is aggravated by racist or religious hostility.

What is a racist incident?

A racist incident is defined as **‘any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person’** (Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report 1999). An incident may have occurred either intentionally or accidentally either overtly or covertly.

This definition is deliberately broad. In the past, racist incidents nationally have been under-reported and this definition ensures that any reported incident has the scope to be investigated, without the potential of the racist dimension disappearing unchallenged. A well-intentioned response may well be to excuse the incident by emphasising the lack of explicit intent. This underplays the feelings of the individual or group on the receiving end and perpetrators must be made aware of the hurt that they have caused and should not be allowed to be empowered at someone else’s expense. The distinctive feature of a racist incident is that a person is attacked not as an individual, but as the representative of a family, community or group. This has potentially harmful consequences not just for the immediate individual, but the wider community.

When an incident perceived to be racist is investigated at a school, the following should be considered:

If the pupils alleged to be responsible are known to hold racist views or to engage in racist behaviour, or be part of a friendship group that do

If they were wearing outward signs of belonging to a racist culture

If there was no, or only slight, provocation

If there is no other explanation for the incident

Whether or not the pupil(s) responsible intended their behaviour to be racist is irrelevant. Of course, when it comes to dealing with an incident, their intentions and attitudes are an important consideration, but at the stage of initial recording and investigating, motivation and awareness are not the main issue.

Racist incidents can involve any of the following:

Verbal abuse, threats and name-calling

Racist graffiti

Racist comments in the course of discussions

Physical intimidation

Violent attacks because of a person's colour, ethnicity, nationality or religion

Incitement of others to behave in a racist way

Refusal to co-operate/work with other pupils because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality or religion

Ridicule of cultural differences e.g. food, dress, language, names, appearance

Racist jokes (including those circulated on mobile phones and via the internet)

Damage caused to a person's property

Possession/distribution of racist material

Wearing racist badges/insignia

In order to work towards the elimination for racism, promote a climate of respect and understanding and prepare children for life in an inter-cultural and increasingly global society, we will employ the following strategies:

- Place value on different ethnic groups, cultures and languages in our multi-racial / cultural society, recognising that culture is central to a child's identity and foster these cultures and incorporate them into our learning environment.
- Ensure that each child is valued as an individual.
- Regard bilingualism as an asset.
- Ensure that lack of fluency in English will not be used as an indication of academic potential.

- Give equal status to all ethnic groups and hold appropriately high expectations of all children.
- Foster a climate where children are confident in reporting and discussing racism.
- Ensure our curriculum:
 - Reflects and values cultural diversity and the wide range of social and ethnic groups in society and will allow other cultures to be described in their own terms.
 - Leads to an understanding of other cultures and lifestyles
 - Enables children to develop the ability to recognise inequality, prejudice, stereotyping and equip children with the knowledge and skills to challenge them, that is incorporates anti-racist teaching strategies.
 - Avoids racial or cultural stereotypes. Those in classical literature that cannot be avoided should be explained to children and contextualised.

As an organisation we should actively counter discrimination, prejudice and inappropriate behaviour and statements by children whenever they occur

Monitoring

Racist incidents will be logged and monitored for patterns of behaviour. Subject managers will monitor the content of the curriculum to ensure it includes opportunities to address issues of equality and has an intercultural and global outlook.

Outcomes

- Staff are confident to deal with racist incidents quickly and sensitively
- Pupils bring racist incidents to the attention of staff
- The curriculum reflects an anti-racist, intercultural and global outlook
- All pupils are successfully integrated into the life of the school whatever their heritage or background

Responses

Racist incidents must be taken seriously however trivial they may seem in isolation. They are very hurtful and demeaning to the individual, while

institutionally they have the potential to negate the validity of the school community.

A racist incident should be reported to a senior member of staff and the incident recorded using the racist form and fully investigated.

It needs to be explained to the perpetrator and the victim that racism is not acceptable. Sanctions will be dealt with in accordance with school discipline policy involving parents as appropriate.

The school reports all racist incidents and reports them to the pupils' parents, school governors and the LEA. If a positive response is not received from parents, the matter may need to be taken up with the Governing Body and / or referred to the school education officer.

Guidelines

Young children may not understand the full meaning of their words and actions but if they go unchecked they are likely to develop behaviour which is damaging to themselves and others.

Even when we feel that a comment or incident is "harmless" (not intentionally racist), we have a responsibility to intervene and counsel. If we do not, we effectively condone what has happened.

Consequently, the school and all its staff will clearly state opposition to such incidents and make it clear that they are unacceptable.

We need to reinforce that it is the behaviour and not the child that is unacceptable.

Victims, onlookers and the perpetrator will be positively supported. The victim should retain some control over the outcome of the matter.

If we deal with incidents, racist or otherwise in isolation nothing will change. Part of our strategy to eliminate incidents must involve promoting a climate which fosters a sense of self-worth and respect for others as well. We also need to empower children they must be involved and feel confident that they will be listened to and that any incident will be dealt with. In addition, we

need some degree of antiracist teaching in our curriculum. Hence only the implementation of this policy as a whole will significantly work towards the achievement of equality of opportunity.

Monitoring

Racist incidents will be logged on the Cambridgeshire LEA proforma (PRFE).

Monitoring information will be used to identify patterns of behaviour and develop strategies to overcome them.

Equalities Policy: Disability

Aims

We are committed to equality of access and opportunity for disabled people.

Rationale

Especially given the nature of our two-storey building we will, upon the impending registration of any disabled child at The Bellbird Primary, consider access and need in association with the LEA and advisory support service.

Our Inclusion Manager and SMT work closely with the LEA to provide any equipment, modification to any equipment or the premises which will enable a disabled child or member of staff to undertake a full education or employment at The Bellbird Primary.

In order to achieve this, we will:

- In partnership with the LEA, identify and remove any physical and procedural practices which could disadvantage a disabled child.
- Promote understanding of disability as an equality issue.

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Incorporate disability issues into the curriculum and school life, e.g. assemblies when appropriate.

- Ensure that we speak of disability using language determined by the disabled. Promote positive images of disability through school resources.

Monitoring

- Work to facilitate access for disabled users will be monitored by the Governors' buildings and premises committee.
- Subject co-ordinators will monitor their subject curriculum, assessment procedures, resources and learning outcomes to ensure the school presents a positive image of disabled people.
- Subject managers and class teachers will monitor their subject curriculum, assessment procedures and resources to ensure they meet the need of any disabled pupils.

Outcomes

- The school works closely with the LEA to ensure equal access to the school site for disabled users.
- The school promotes a positive image of disability.
- Disabled users feel confident, secure and valued when using our site and facilities

Equalities Policy – inter-cultural education

Aims

- To develop a respect, knowledge and understanding for other cultures, religions and ways of life that are present in our increasingly global society
- To nurture the self-esteem and sense of self of all pupils

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- Contribute to pupils understanding of the positive role they have to play to develop a just and fair society
- Combat inequality and discriminatory practices

Rationale

Children need to develop a respect, knowledge and understanding for other cultures, religions and ways of life if they are to play a positive and effective role in our increasingly global society. A knowledge and respect for others goes part way to challenging inequality.

Strategies to ensure that an inter-cultural out-look permeates the life of the school

- Celebrate the diversity of language, culture and religious belief in our school and the wider society
Celebrate world festivals and note the achievements of people from all cultures around the world
- Purchase of resources will reflect the diverse range of cultures and religions in our society
- Display around the school will celebrate the diversity of cultures around the school
- Recognise the valuable resources our children, parents, staff and community visitors can bring to our inter-cultural education

Monitoring

- Subject managers will monitor the curriculum, assessment procedures, resources and learning outcomes to ensure the effective intercultural outlook of their subject
- Senior staff will monitor to ensure the wider life of the school, for example assemblies have an explicit inter-cultural perspective

Outcomes

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- Children and staff have understanding and respect for the cultures, religions and lifestyle of themselves and others
- All children recognise that their own background and experiences are valued by the school
- Access to the whole curriculum is offered to all pupils, recognising that equality of access does not necessarily result in equal outcomes
- The school community operates on a basis of co-operation and respect
- Resources reflect the cultural and religious diversity of our school, community and the wider world

Equalities Policy – Employment and Staff Development

Aims

- To ensure all staff feel valued members of the school community
- To enable all staff to reach their potential
- To support staff in their professional development
- Relationships of the staff to act as role models to the children and their parents

Rationale

Our Equal Opportunities Policy is guided by legislation and LEA policy

We are committed to ensuring that all adults working at and applying for a position at The Bellbird Primary receive full and equal consideration through the whole recruitment process.

In order to achieve this, we will:

Follow the guidelines laid down by the LEA when new recruitment is made

- Ensure all staff are made aware of our equal opportunities policy and are supported when discriminatory situations arise
- Ensure all staff will receive details of professional courses operated by the LEA and local teaching training establishments

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- Using informal staff development interviews and performance management procedures to ensure there is a mutually agreed focus for personal professional development in writing within agreed time scale.