



St Mary's Catholic Primary School **Equality Policy** [Jan 2019]

Why we have developed this Equality Scheme

This Equality Policy is a single policy for all protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to developing 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, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our equality policy is inclusive of our whole school community – pupils/students, staff, parents/carers and visitors - who have been involved in and contributed to its development. Visitors include parishioners, volunteer helpers, governors, Diocese staff, County Council staff and all other parties who either visit the school or communicate with members of the school community.

We recognise that in keeping with technological advancements, the equality policy has to cover not just face-to-face meetings between people but also electronic, remote communication.

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

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between groups.

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 school within the wider context

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, race and ethnicity, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and social deprivation.

St Mary's is situated in the centre of Crowborough, a small town south of Tunbridge Wells. Most pupils come from the local area, but the school also serves a wider catchment area due to its Catholic nature. The school serves a population with a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds but predominantly from the professional working class. Many children are driven to school but many live within walking distance.

Many parents work outside the town, some commuting to London. The school is a one-form entry 4-11 school with 208 pupils on roll (as at September 2018) Most pupils come from a white British background but over recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of children entering school in different year groups from abroad. We have a growing Polish, Indian and Filipino population.

St Mary's is a Catholic School in the diocese of Arundel and Brighton. We have a strong religious ethos and close links with the local parish church of St Mary's.

Overall aims of our policy

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- 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, sexual orientation, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic origins.

To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life the Equality Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing, and material outcomes.

The themes are reflected in our Equality Objectives.

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.

MISSION STATEMENT

**St Mary's School is a welcoming Catholic Community.
A place where we come to ...**

PRAY
We deepen our love
for Jesus through
personal prayer,
reflection and
collective worship

LOVE
Knowing that God
loves us we nurture a
positive sense of self
and we serve the
needs of others in a
changing and
challenging world.



LEARN
We support and
encourage each other to
do our best in all things.
We celebrate each others
strengths and abilities.

ENJOY
By learning to respect
ourselves and others we
can fully enjoy living a
life of opportunities and
realise our potential.

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 recognise 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 recognise 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.
- Financial resources of parents/carers. We appreciate that families have differing amounts of financial resources available. The amounts available or that they chose to make available to support their child whilst in the school community will differ.

Our vision statement

At St Mary's we seek 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 recognise 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.

St Mary's is a successful Catholic school. In celebrating diversity we welcome families from all faiths and backgrounds who are happy to support our ethos. We aim at all times to live out our mission to Pray – Learn – Love – Enjoy. We hold the needs of the whole child at the heart of all that we do. Academic achievement is very important to us but not in isolation and as such we nurture and develop the spiritual, sporting, musical, social, moral and emotional skills and talents in all children too.

We aim to equip our children for 21st century learning and life. We encourage resilience, the ability to reflect and adapt to the changing needs of the modern world, to think creatively, to work both independently and collaboratively as part of a team and to act responsibly as global citizens.

Our duties

We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and have sought to involve the whole school community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all.

We have due regard to the need to ensure that persons with a protected characteristic are not disproportionately, negatively impacted as a result of our decision or policy making. We positively foster good relations between different groups of pupils and the wider school community.

We are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as recognising and accepting our duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (The Prevent Duty 2015) and promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of school life, including the provision of extended services.

These opportunities are likely to include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities.

- preparation for entry to the school
- break and lunchtimes
- the provision of school meals
- interaction with peers
- opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- exam arrangements
- behaviour management approach and sanctions
- exclusion procedures
- school clubs, activities and school trips
- the school's arrangements for working with other agencies

- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- learning and teaching and the planned curriculum
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- grouping of pupils
- home learning
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare
- the involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies
- school policies

The roles and responsibilities within our school community

The governing board will:

- Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this statement are published and communicated throughout the school, including to staff, pupils and parents, and that they are reviewed and updated at least once every four years
- Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the headteacher

The headteacher will:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils
- Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to governors

All School Staff will:

- Support the headteacher in promoting knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives amongst staff and pupils
- Support the headteacher in identifying any staff training needs, and deliver training as necessary

How we developed our scheme

The development of this policy has involved the whole of our school community. We've involved and listened to what they have to say, including people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities, taking account of all the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010.

Our pupils are given opportunities to add to this through:

- The Pupil Councils
- Pupil voice conferences
- Pastoral Care sessions
- The PSHE/EPR curriculum

Our staff are given opportunities to add to this through:

- Staff meetings
- Staff briefings
- Support staff meetings
- INSET days and CPD

Our school governors are given opportunities to add to this through:

- INSET days and governor training
- Dedicated agenda items at Full Governor and committee meetings.
- Invitation to staff meetings

Parents/carers are given opportunities to add to this through:

- Website
- Newsletter
- Parent consultation meetings
- Parent forum / coffee mornings
- Structured conversation meetings

Minority, marginalised and potentially vulnerable groups are given opportunities to add to this through:

- Pupil voice
- Questionnaire feedback

Our partners in the community groups are given opportunities to add to this through:

- Newsletter
- Coffee mornings
- Meetings with staff / Inclusion Manager / Headteacher

How we developed our Policy – Using Information

The development of this policy involved the whole of our school community. We will involve and listen to what they have to say, including people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities, taking account of all the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010.

All new policies take into account diversity within the school and the needs of all adults and pupils throughout the school. That the work we have undertaken, on values, has had a positive impact on the whole school community. In addition, we know our school well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this. We have used a variety of data including incident reporting data to support us in this work. We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, faith, disability and gender and report these to the Governing Body.

We are vigilant regarding bullying and collect pupil views formally through the Pupil Councils and more informally during PHSE lessons. Our school focuses a great deal on values work and feedback is received during these sessions and assemblies.

The Local Authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

St Mary's buys into a range of LA traded services including CLASS, the Educational psychology service and the County Equality and Participation team.

We have established good links with our local and wider community. We welcome them into our school. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school.

Increasingly we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. We work closely with the local authority and Diocese on procurement – buying in services - to ensure that equality issues are given full regard. When buying goods and services from external suppliers, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

OfSTED inspectors visit us regularly and report on how we are actively promoting equality and diversity, tackling bullying and discrimination and narrowing any gaps in achievement between different groups of children and learners, as well as how we are promoting British Values and preventing radicalisation and extremism, preparing Pupils/students to respect others and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.

- *Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of tolerance and respect. They talked to me confidently about different world religions and how valuing each other's different views and beliefs was very important.*
- *Leaders take every opportunity to enrich pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils develop behaviours of fairness, equality and respect which ensure that they can grow up as model citizens. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.*
- *They behave well and respect adults and classmates alike. They know how to treat each other equally, respecting one another's differences, and enjoy the wide group of friends they develop at the school. They relish the opportunities to take on greater responsibilities such as play leaders, Year 6 ambassadors and morning gate monitors.* [OfSTED Jan 2017]

We write and update our Single Document regularly which means we are constantly monitoring the make-up and needs of our staff and pupils – and assessing how well we are meeting those needs.

We also value more qualitative information which may be given to us through pupil/learner voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously.

The Local Authority provides a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps us to identify our strengths and those areas requiring action.

We make use of other agencies if needed:

- The Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS)
- School nurse
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service
- Therapeutic Intervention Service (TIS)
- Education Psychology Service (EPS)

We have established good links with our local and our wider community. We welcome them into our school. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school. These links include:

- Local parishioners
- Volunteer helpers

By listening to those within our community and to our partners, we are able to identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches and focus our energy where it is required.

Our Staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers, admin and premises staff) from discrimination based on the protected characteristics. With regard to disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled.

This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes) and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society. In accordance with the Equality Act we do not enquire about the health of an applicant until a job offer has been made or require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure.

We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and take seriously and act on incidents of harassment and discrimination recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.

As a Catholic school with a distinctive religious ethos the following highlights our Diocesan response to all areas of equality:

The teaching of the Church on Equality

The social teaching of the Church has consistently promoted equality of treatment for all people as an application of the principles of natural justice. The principle of equal treatment is now encoded in European law.

‘The Gospel imperative to love our neighbour entails not only that we should help those in need, but also address the causes of destitution and poverty. The deepening of spiritual life must go hand in hand with practical concern for our neighbour, and thus with social action’. All members of the Church must ‘...*play an active part in striving to build a just and compassionate social order.*’ ‘*The Church has the right and duty to advocate a social order in which the human dignity of all is fostered, and to protest when in any way it is threatened.*’ (Cardinal Hume)

All people have basic human rights. At the centre of these is the right to life itself. All human rights derive from the nature of the human person made in the image of God. The Gospel leaves us in no doubt that all men and women are equal in the sight of God and should be accorded equally the respect and dignity due the children of God. This is the guiding principle for our relations with all other people, regardless of whether or not they are members of the Church.

The Church is, in both historical and in theological terms, a catholic or universal church for all human kind. Diversity in age, gender, race, ability, social background or cultural identity should be regarded as enriching the whole community of the Church rather than as providing a source of division and gradation of treatment.

Legal Obligations on Governors

The governors of voluntary aided schools must accept and carry out all the responsibilities towards their staff as laid down in employment law, and towards their pupils as laid down in educational law. The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, ability or disability.

Special educational needs and disability

As well as the avoidance of active discrimination, equality of treatment in schools also involves ensuring that all learners have equal opportunities to access the curriculum. Schools must make provision for students with special educational needs, language needs and physical disabilities to enable them to enjoy the same learning opportunities as other students. The Special Needs and Disability Act (2001) lays specific responsibilities on governors for school admissions and for the delivery of education and associated services. Disabled persons must not be placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with other persons who are not disabled. Since September 2002, governors have had a specific duty to plan to increase the accessibility of their school to disabled pupils. The provisions for pupils with special educational needs are laid out in the Code of Practice issued by the DfE.

Sexual orientation and behaviour

All staff must be subject to the same rules of conduct and these must be consistently applied. Schools experience particular difficulties when legal obligations appear to conflict with the moral teaching of the Church, as in the area of sexual discrimination. However, the Church makes a clear distinction between orientation and behaviour. It recognises the importance of protecting people of any sexual orientation against discrimination or harassment. It would expect the Church’s moral teaching to be reflected in codes of behaviour for staff and students in schools. All schools, therefore, should treat any incidents involving bullying or harassment related to sexual orientation as a serious matter that will be followed up and resolved.

Employment of Staff

The governors of a Catholic school have a duty to uphold the Catholic character of the school. It is fully compatible with the law on equal opportunities and employment that they can make it a condition of employment that employees are conscientious and loyal to the aims and objectives of the school. They can require employees to have regard to the Catholic character of the school and not to do anything detrimental or prejudicial to that interest (Section 60(5) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.)

There is backing in law for governors to prefer Catholic applicants in appointments where denominational affiliation is relevant to the job. In particular, the Bishops of England and Wales have the right to reserve for practising Catholics the posts of head, deputy head and heads/coordinators of religious education in Catholic schools.

The Church recognises the outstanding contribution which persons of other denominations and faiths make to the work of Catholic schools. The governors should give explicit recognition to that work whenever possible, especially when it demonstrates exceptional loyalty to the school. Appropriate support should be offered, for example, to new staff, who may be unfamiliar with specific aspects of Catholic values and practice which they may encounter.

Race relations

The Race Relations Act (1976) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, national or ethnic origin. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2001) imposes a general duty to eliminate discrimination and promote positive race relations. The Catholic school should promote racial harmony by living out its core aims and values. Its life should be characterised by the promotion of the Gospel values of love for one's neighbour and help for the oppressed. It should be evident from policies and practice that everyone is committed to just and fair treatment for all.

Responding to equality-related incidents

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, transphobia, biphobia, negative views of disabled people or people who practise a religion or follow a faith.. 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 will record all hate incidents and prejudice based bullying. We will 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.

Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

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 our equality data 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 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 and published every 4 years. See Section 3.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES: 2017 - 2021

Link to Public Sector Equality Duty	Protected characteristic	Aim:	Objective:	Target group(s): e.g. whole school, girls, boys, SEN, staff etc	Action:	Who's responsible?	Dates	Milestone/ progress:
All aims of duty	All protected characteristics	To increase pupil, staff and governors awareness of legal and human rights and the responsibilities that underpin society	For pupils to understand they have rights, how they can exercise their rights and understand how rights link to responsibilities	All pupils and staff	To work in line with the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award ⁶	Senior Leadership Team and Governors	Sept2018 - Sept 2019	Global Citizenship during enrichment
All aims of duty	All protected characteristics	To increase the participation of pupils/students from minority, marginalised or vulnerable backgrounds in school life	Increase the diversity of pupils involved in the decision-making processes of the school	Minority, marginalised and vulnerable pupils	Set up group of pupils to develop actions which better involve the target group	Teachers with responsibility of pupil councils	Sept 2018 – Jul 2019	Pupil councils
Advance equality of opportunity	Disability/ All	To increase social and emotional skills for pupils/students with social, emotional and mental health needs	Improved ability by pupils/students to handle difficult situations and a reduction in classroom disruption	Pupils/students with social, emotional and mental health needs.	Train staff to deliver small group work sessions to support targeted pupils/students in developing social and emotional skills	Inclusion Manager	Sept 2017- July 2019	Wellbeing offered during enrichment
Advance equality of opportunity	Disability	To better understand the needs of disabled parents/carers within our school community	Improved access and communication with disabled parents/carers	Disabled parents/carers	Make all information home to parents more accessible and less wordy. Gather and record information relating to disabled parents.	Inclusion Manager / Teachers	Sept 2017 ongoing	Increased social media communication
Advance equality of opportunity	Other	To improve the attendance of pupils who are from disadvantaged backgrounds	Improved attainment	Children eligible for free school meals / PP children	Collate and analyse data relating to attendance by target group Review data regularly – meet with parents. Involve ESBAS if required	SLT	Sept 2018– July 2019	
All aims of duty	All protected characteristics	To continue to involve the whole school in work on values	To develop further respect and empathy for people of all faiths, cultures and beliefs with all stakeholders	All pupils and staff	To ensure that multi-faiths are taught well and referred to appropriately within RE lessons/Collective worship/PHSE lessons To make sure that British values are clearly linked to SMSC across the school.	HT RE SL, whole staff.	Sept 2017 – January 2020	Review of impact of values work undertaken by School Councils/staff meetings

Key legislation

Equality Act 2010

Harmonises and streamlines existing equality legislation into one Single Act.

The Act protects pupils from discrimination and harassment based on 'protected characteristics':

- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

This relates to:

- prospective pupils
- pupils at the school
- in some limited circumstances, former pupils

The Act also contains positive action provisions which enable schools to take proportionate action to address disadvantage faced by particular pupils. Such action could include targeted provision, resources or putting in place additional or bespoke provision to benefit a particular disadvantaged pupil group.

The Public Sector Equality Duty commenced in April 2011.

There are exceptions to enable single-sex schools to admit only pupils of one sex and for schools with a religious character to enable them to have admissions criteria which give preference to members of their own religion.

For more information:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00215460/equality-act-2010- departmental-advice>

Accessibility planning

Accessibility planning is a statutory duty. Schools must plan for:

- Increasing access for disabled children and young people to the school curriculum
- Improving access to the physical environment of schools, and
- Improving the delivery of written information to disabled children and young people

Auxiliary aids and services:

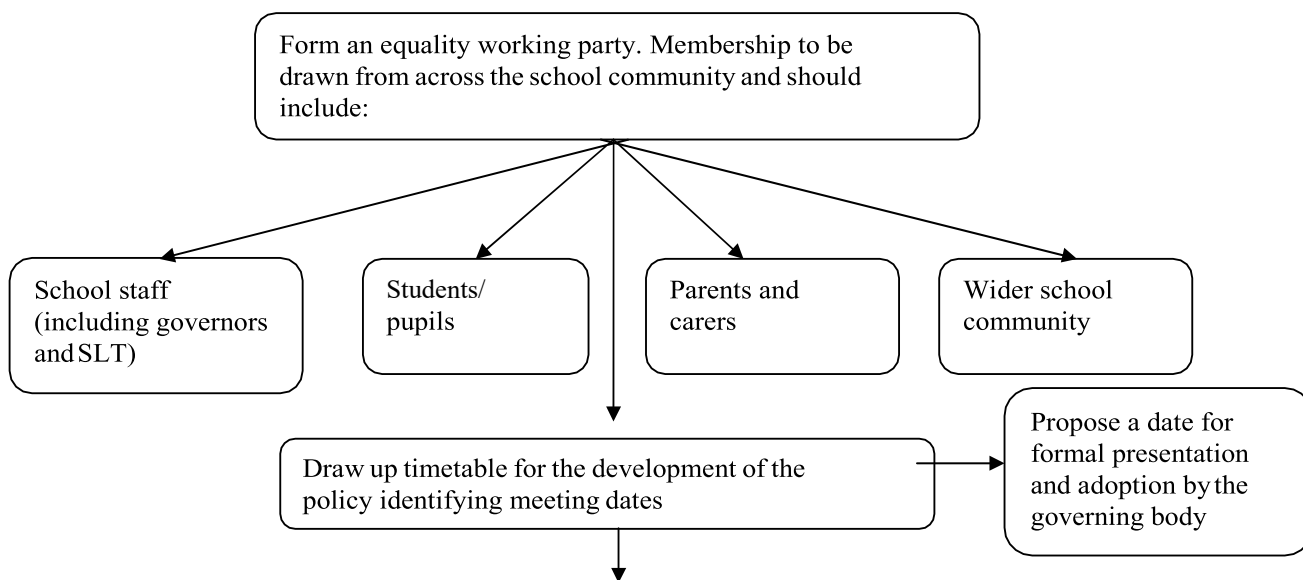
We acknowledge our duty to provide auxiliary aids as part of the reasonable adjustment duty for all schools as from September 2012

The school and the Local Authority acknowledge our reasonable adjustment duties under the Equality Act 2010. We will consider whether to provide auxiliary aids that are directly related to disabled children's educational needs as a reasonable adjustment, particularly where the child is not provided for under an SEN statement, or where the statement does not provide the auxiliary aid or service.

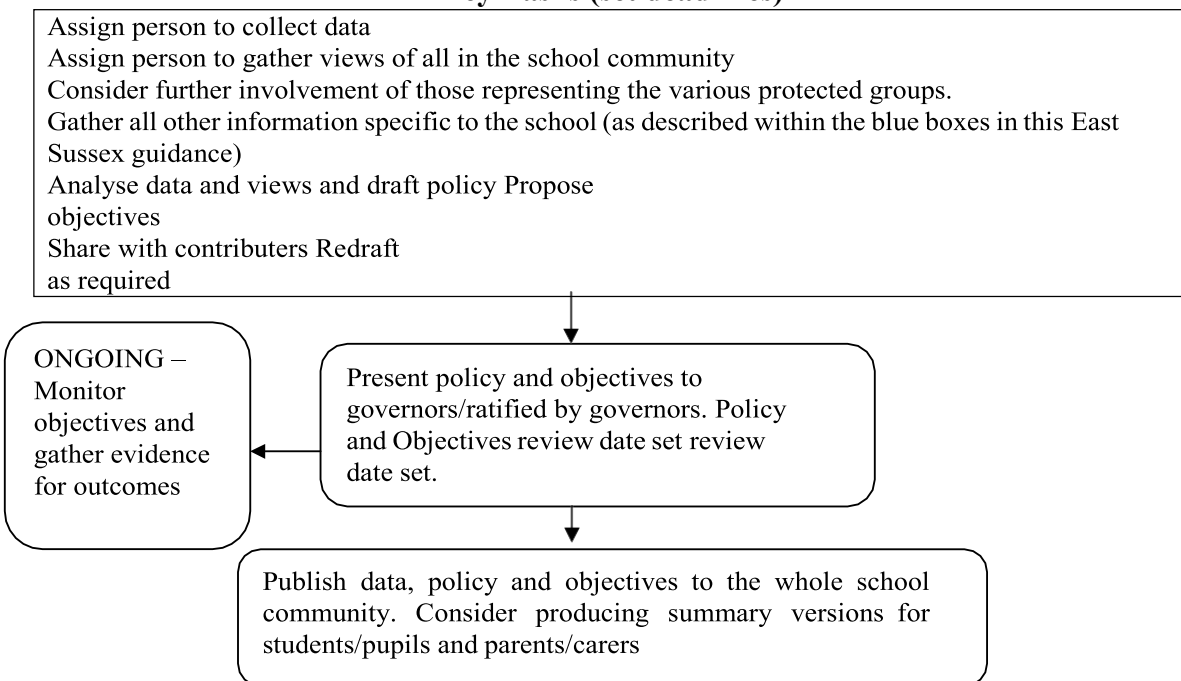
We have a separate Accessibility Plan available.

Appendix B

Process chart for the development and review of Equality Policy and objectives



Key Tasks (set deadlines)



Additional information on Discrimination on Grounds of Religion or Belief

Discrimination on grounds of religion or belief means treating a person less favourably than another person is or would be treated, because of their religion or belief, or the religion or belief they are perceived to have, their lack of religion or belief, or the religion or belief, or lack of it, of someone else with whom they are associated.

Discrimination can be either direct or indirect:

The Act sets out that it is unlawful for maintained schools, independent schools and special schools to discriminate against a person in the following ways:

- (a) in the terms on which it offers to admit him/her as a pupil
- (b) by refusing to accept an application to admit him/her as a pupil or
- (c) where he/she is a pupil of the establishment:
 - (i) in the way in which it affords him/her access to any benefit, facility or service
 - (ii) by refusing him/her access to a benefit, facility or service
 - (iii) by excluding him/her from the establishment or
 - (iv) by subjecting him/her to any other detriment

The body responsible for ensuring that no discrimination takes place depends on the type of school. For maintained schools, it will be the LA or governing body, depending on who took the decision or action complained of; whereas, for independent schools and special schools not maintained by the LA, the responsible body will be the proprietor of the school.

Many schools will already have in place fair, non-discriminatory policies for dealing with pupils and their parents. They may not need to make any change to these in order to comply with the Act. Indeed, schools often lead the way in our society, which is home to people of many cultures, religions and beliefs, by practising and teaching about equality, inclusion and recognising diversity.

The Act provides that schools (unless exempted as detailed later in this guidance) will not be allowed to admit or refuse to admit pupils on the basis of religion or belief and must treat pupils equally, irrespective of their own or their parents' religion or belief or lack of it. This also applies to access to benefits, facilities or services. In addition pupils cannot be excluded from school or subjected to any detriment on the basis of their (or their parents') religion or belief or lack of it.

However, there is a long tradition in this country of schools with a religious ethos and character. In addition, there are requirements on all schools to provide religious education, and daily acts of collective worship, most of which in any term must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (with limited exceptions). Taken alone, the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief would create certain difficulties for schools in their proper day-to-day operation. Some limited exceptions were, therefore, written into the Act.

By their very nature, faith schools attract applications from pupils on the basis of religion. To enable faith schools to continue to operate in accordance with their particular religious ethos, limited exceptions to the non-discrimination provisions have been introduced.

It is good practice for faith schools to open a number of places each year for children who themselves, or whose parents are of other faiths or no faith, in order to ensure a diverse mix of pupils and to reflect the wider community – and many schools already do this. For the precise wording of the exceptions in this area you will need to refer to section 49 of the Act

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm> but, in summary, the exceptions mean that maintained schools which have a religious character and independent schools which have a religious ethos (and are registered as such) are not subject to the provisions relating to admissions and pupils' access to benefits, facilities and services.

This means that faith schools will still be able to give priority in admissions to children on the basis of their faith. Schools can also restrict certain services and benefits that they offer to pupils sharing the faith of the school, or can offer them in a different way to pupils of different beliefs or religions - or none. However, it is unlawful for a maintained faith school to leave places unfilled where there are fewer applications than places available. Undersubscribed faith schools must admit all children who apply, regardless of their faith. Similarly, where a school gives priority to a proportion of children not of the faith and there are insufficient applicants in this category, places must not be left open and must be filled by children of the faith (and vice versa).

However, once pupils have been admitted, schools may not exclude them or subject them to any other detriment, on grounds of their religion or belief, or lack of it, or that of their parents. Detriment is a wide concept and is not precisely defined by law. It is open to interpretation by the courts on a case-by-case basis.

There is a broad exemption in the Act for anything to do with the content of the curriculum. This is to ensure that all schools can continue to deliver the broad-based and inclusive curriculum to which all children are entitled without fear of challenge based on the religious views of particular parents or children.

For the precise wording of the exemption please refer to section 50 of the Act
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm>.

The exemption covers anything done by schools in connection with the content of the curriculum. It accordingly covers the National Curriculum, together with elements such as RE which is not part of the National Curriculum but which is required by law to be taught in maintained schools. It includes elements such as the provision of school library books, which are aimed at the delivery of a broad-based and balanced education to pupils. It also extends to independent schools, which do not have to teach the National Curriculum.

Under existing education legislation, all pupils in maintained schools are normally required to participate in a daily act of collective worship, the majority of which in any term must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from this activity so that they need not take part in the practising of another (or any) religion if they do not wish it. Schools must comply with this request by excusing those children.

This right also extends to parents of children in maintained faith schools which provide religious education and activities more closely reflecting the school's ethos.

The right also extends to the parents of children in Academies, although it should be noted that this right is by virtue of the Academy funding agreement and is not set in legislation as it is for maintained schools.

Parents of children in independent schools do not have the same statutory rights to withdraw their children from collective worship, although a school might well permit them to do so.

Section 55 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 also gives sixth form pupils of maintained schools the right to withdraw from the daily act of collective worship without parental consent.

All acts of collective worship provided by any school are exempted from the prohibition of discrimination under the Act. Please refer to section 50 of the Act for the precise wording
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm>.

This exemption ensures that all schools can continue to provide collective worship in the way legislation requires them to. It also extends to activities organised by or on behalf of the school. Schools can, therefore, continue to arrange, for example, for children to attend the local church to participate in a harvest festival or Christmas carol service, although parents would, of course, be expected to be informed of this and the likely content of the service, so that they may elect to withdraw their child from that particular activity. Schools will not be required to provide equivalent worship or assemblies for children of all religions and beliefs, although they would be able to do so with agreement from their local SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education).