



Horsmonden Primary School

Equal Opportunities Policy

1 Introduction

We need an Equal Opportunities Policy because inequalities exist in our society. This can make the achievement of some people's full potential considerably more difficult to attain than others. In a school situation Equal opportunities means ensuring that every individual has equal access to an education or to career development in education. Equality means having the same rights and status as everybody else.

The law gives us guidance and provides positive duties for schools to promote equality.

This policy outlines how our school ensures that equality is being promoted, outlines what provision is available and what action is to be taken.

As a community school, Horsmonden Primary takes its commitment to the duty to promote community cohesion very seriously, and we have agreed a Community Cohesion policy which should be considered in conjunction with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

It is the responsibility of the whole school community to abide by our policy.

2 The Aims of the Equal Opportunities Policy

At Horsmonden Primary School we believe that every member of our school community has the right to receive education or employment in an environment which is free from prejudice. Every pupil has the right to receive the best possible education. We are committed to providing all our children with an equal opportunity to thrive in a setting free from discrimination in all its forms. We strive to be a school where adults and children, whatever their race, religion, gender, abilities, family and social circumstances, will find safety and respect for themselves, their families and their traditions. Our policy seeks to ensure that every member of our community respects others and is respected, achieves his or her full potential and is welcomed and valued.

To make this commitment real, we aim to develop policies and practices based on the particular needs of our school and its community.

We aim to:

- ✓ ensure that children have the opportunity to reach their potential in all areas of school life;

- ✓ ensure that parents and children can make choices free from prejudice and stereotyping;
- ✓ oppose any form of racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination;
- ✓ value every pupil's language and cultural background;
- ✓ promote respect between cultures.

3 Ethos and Atmosphere

The school positively values all the staff and children and welcomes diversity.

We seek to promote the achievement of all children. Teaching staff make time to praise children for their behaviour, contributions and their work. Each week we hold a Special Mentions assembly where children are publicly awarded for achievement in all areas of school life, and another Certificates Assembly where achievements outside school are celebrated. All children will have examples of their work displayed in classrooms and corridors.

Children and staff are called by their preferred names and we ensure that names are spelt and pronounced correctly.

Our multi-faith assemblies and Religious Education promote justice, fairness and equality as well as informing children of many different religious stories, traditions and beliefs.

We have a children's School Council which meets regularly to discuss concerns and suggestions raised in class council meetings. The councillors are elected by their class members. The council initiates many discussions and makes contributions to the decision making process of issues concerning children in the school.

Circle time/open discussion sessions are held on a regular basis in each class. This is part of our Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Issues discussed include equal opportunities. Children and class teachers write their class rules and expectations at the beginning of each school year and address equal opportunity and how they are going to ensure equality in the classroom.

Children behave exceptionally well in the playground. Whilst they have an exemplary record of acceptable attitudes and behaviour, we must always be vigilant. Any incidents of unacceptable behaviour should be reported to the Headteacher. Any incidents of racism are reported to the Local Authority each term in line with the county policy.

4 An Inclusive Curriculum

At Horsmonden Primary School, children have the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills, concepts and experiences through their participation in a broad and balanced curriculum. We have high expectations of all our children and do not make assumptions about ability or areas of interest.

The school aims to deliver an inclusive curriculum. The National Curriculum statement requires teachers to have due regard to three key principles:

1. Setting suitable learning challenges;
2. Responding to children' diverse learning needs;
3. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of children.

The focus is far wider than disability and special educational needs. It includes children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage makes the same commitment to meet the diverse needs of children through:

- ✓ careful planning;
- ✓ appropriate teaching strategies and support;
- ✓ providing a safe environment where racial, religious, disability, class and gender stereotypes are challenged.

An awareness of multi-cultural issues informs all our planning. Through geography and history topics, children learn about different societies, environments and cultures. Religion is taught within certain topics as well as in assemblies and as a subject in its own right. Religions, cultures, traditions and societies are presented by the teacher with equal respect and value. When discussing these issues, teachers focus upon similarities as well as on differences.

Teachers aim to take into account individual children's experiences and try to make lessons and activities interesting and accessible to all.

We have a very small minority of Children who speak English as an additional language as well as those who have been identified as having educational or physical needs all of whom are considered in all aspects of planning, teaching and assessment.

5 Classroom Management and Organisation

In the classroom, teachers regularly mix groups working together to enable children to work with a variety of class members.

As some styles of teaching can advantage particular children, we use a variety of strategies which include whole class teaching, group discussions, paired and individual activities.

6 Pupil Welfare and Guidance

Children are offered sympathetic support by their class teacher and other members of the school community.

We have a carefully planned programme of personal and social education which includes sex and relationships education.

There are planned opportunities, often arising from class topics, to discuss equality issues, to challenge stereotyping, discrimination and harassment. This ensures that these issues are dealt with pro-actively, not just after an incident. We have developed a behaviour policy and an anti-bullying policy which includes positive strategies and monitoring procedures.

7 Child Protection

Our utmost priority is the safety and wellbeing of the children in our care. The school based Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator (DCPC), Mrs Jodi Hacker, is always made aware of any concerns staff may have and appropriate steps are taken for the child's protection.

Teaching staff receive regular training and support on how to act when suspicions of child abuse are raised and how to proceed with sensitivity if a child discloses information. The DCPC works closely with other agencies to promote the safety and well-being of the child.

A governor has been nominated to oversee Child Protection and Safeguarding at the school, and the DCPC and Chair of Governors have both undertaken mandatory Safer-Recruitment Training in order to strengthen our recruitment procedures.

8 Resources

The term "resources" is used to include all the learning materials used in school.

We intend for pictures and posters on display around the school to present positive images of people from all sections of our society. We aim to show a positive portrayal of women and men, people of different ages, physical abilities, races and religions, across the social class spectrum. When ordering new resources, time is spent to choose material which challenges stereotypes and promotes our diverse community.

We aim to meet specific resource needs for children of different abilities. Please see the Special Needs Policy for further information.

9 Staff

The school is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing. All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. A commitment to equal opportunities is included in the selection criteria for all posts. All new staff are given a staff handbook which collates key school information. A file of policies is kept on the shared staff drive for reference.

10 Parents, Carers and the Community

We acknowledge and support the varied family circumstances in which our children live and we try to ensure that all carers and parents are always welcomed at our school. A regular newsletter is sent home to parents and carers (including separated parents) detailing current events and other information about school life. This and the school website are our key forms of communication.

We value the contributions parents have made to the development of the outdoor school environment, to the teaching of topics, provision of resources, help provided on visits and swimming trips and the support we receive during preparation for school performances. We encourage all parents to contribute and take part in the life of the school in many ways.

11 Dealing with Harassment

Harassment on account of ability, gender, race, religion, sexuality or social background are unjust and totally unacceptable. We have developed a clear procedure for dealing with complaints and grievances including those regarding harassment. For more information, please see the Complaints Procedure.

Appendix I

The Law

The following section provides short summaries of some relevant legal provisions on equality issues affecting schools. It is not a comprehensive guide to the law, and should be read in conjunction with detailed guidance and Codes of Practice available from the Department for Education, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and other bodies.

Education Reform Act 1988

All children in maintained schools should follow the national curriculum to the maximum extent possible.

Education Act 1944/Children Act 1989

Children are entitled to efficient full time education suitable to their ages, abilities, aptitudes and any special educational needs they may have.

Education Act 1981 and 1993

Where a pupil has been assessed as having special educational needs, a statement of needs must be prepared and maintained in accordance with its provisions.

Children with special educational needs require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education, including the National Curriculum. Close partnership with parents and consideration of the wishes of the child are deemed essential to effective assessment and provision for special educational need.

Education Act 1993

Governors in all schools must produce a written policy on sex education. The sexual and reproductive biology covered in National Curriculum science at both primary and secondary levels is mandatory for all children. Secondary schools must provide a wider programme of sex education, which must include HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. At primary level, governors must decide whether to provide a programme of sex education which goes beyond the national curriculum. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from sex education where it is outside the national curriculum.

Disability Discrimination Act 2003

It may be unlawful to discriminate against disabled people applying for jobs, or against existing disabled staff. A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Reasonable adjustments (such as the provision of ramps) may be made if premises or employment arrangements substantially disadvantage a disabled person compared with a non-disabled person. Disabled people are also protected from discrimination in the provision of non-educational services (such as fund-raising events) on school premises.

Equal Pay Act 1970

Women and men are entitled in principle to the same pay and contractual terms if they are carrying out the same or similar work, or work of equal value. 'Pay' is broadly defined and includes, for example, pensions, bonus and performance pay, sick pay and overtime.

Human Rights Act 1998

It may be unlawful for the school to act in a way which infringes the rights and freedoms of a pupil or member of staff under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. An example of a possible infringement might be failure to take action against bullying of a pupil in breach of the prohibition of inhumane and degrading treatment.

Race Relations Act 1976

A school must not treat a person less favourably on racial grounds with regard to admissions, exclusions, access to benefits, facilities or services or the employment of staff. Racial grounds are grounds of race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origin. Discrimination on racial grounds can also be indirect. Indirect discrimination is unlawful unless justified irrespective of racial grounds and can occur when a practice appears neutral, but in fact has a disproportionate adverse impact on those from a certain racial group.

It is unlawful for an educational establishment to discriminate directly or indirectly on racial grounds with regard to:

- admissions
- access to benefits, facilities or services
- exclusions
- the employment of staff

Racial grounds are grounds of race, colour, nationality - including citizenship - or ethnic or national origins. A more precise definition of racial group has been given by the House of Lords, who said that;

- a long shared history, and
- a cultural tradition of its own were essential characteristics, but that other characteristics were also relevant:
- a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors;
- a common language;
- a common literature;
- a common religion;
- being either a minority or a majority within a larger community

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Schools are required to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

A school must not treat a person less favourably on grounds of sex or status as married with regard to admissions, exclusions, access to benefits, facilities or services or the employment of staff. Discrimination on grounds of sex can also be indirect. Indirect discrimination is unlawful unless justified irrespective of grounds of sex and can occur when a practice appears neutral, but in fact has a disproportionate adverse impact on those of one sex.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a boy or a girl on the grounds of sex with regards to:

- admissions
- access to benefits, facilities or services
- exclusions

It is also unlawful to discriminate against staff with regard to employment on grounds of sex or marriage.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (in force by 2003)

A school will be placed under new duties not to treat disabled children less favourably than non-disabled children and to take reasonable steps to remedy substantial disadvantage to disabled children. The Act also affects the law on Special Educational Needs, including strengthening the rights of parents to a mainstream place for their child with SEN.

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