



Equality Policy

Why we have developed this Equality Policy

This Equality Policy for Polegate School brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously for Race, Gender and Disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010 as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further committed to the development of 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.

Linked policies and documents:

SEN policy, anti-bullying policy, behaviour policy, teaching and learning, equality objectives, accessibility plan, reporting incidents procedures. Inclusion Mark report (document reporting on practice in school) School council

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole school community – pupils/students, staff, parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies - who we have engaged with and who have been actively involved in and contributed to its development. 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, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation.

The area:

- 59% of our pupils come from Polegate North
- 15% of our pupils come from Polegate South

- The highest level of educational qualification achieved by the biggest group of Polegate North residents (31%) is No qualifications. This is significantly higher compared with the 19.9% of residents aged 16 and over in Wealden with no qualifications. (WDC profile 2014)
- Polegate North is the Wealden ward with the 3rd highest number of Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency households. (WDC profile 2014)
- The average household weekly income is £481.70 compared to £555.40 for East Sussex. (2014)
- 11.9% of people are affected by income deprivation compared to 7.9% in Wealden. (2014)
- 19.2% of children are living in poverty (in receipt of out-of-work benefits/ in receipt of tax credits with income below £30,000. Since 2010 there has been an increase each year. The Wealden average is 10.9% (2014). 1 in 5 children are living in poverty.
- 11.9% of people are affected by income deprivation compared to 11.9% in Wealden. (2015 OCSI)
- The percentage of lone parent families is higher (21.7%) than the Wealden average (9.7)
- For those children living in poverty 145 live in a lone parent household compared to 50 living in a couple family. This is statistically higher than East Sussex.

The children

- We have a high percentage of gypsy roma traveller pupils at the school, 4%. (17 pupils)
- 20.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals ever 6 (126 pupils)
- 4% are believed not to have English as their first language.
- 18.3% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs (115 pupils)
- SEN support 16.6% (104 pupils)
- 1.8% EHC plans (11 pupils)
- Disability- across the school we have 34 children identified with a disability. These include: Cerebral Palsy, visual impairment, dyslexia, autism and diabetes.

Overall aims of our Equality 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.

Issues relating to adults within the school community can be embraced under these themes and reflected in the action plan.

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.

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

Our school vision is learning without limits. At the heart of this is valuing difference and diversity and not allowing any aspect of the above to become a barrier to learning. We use role models from other cultures to embody this and demonstrate that excellence can be found everywhere.

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

Our vision statement about Equality

Polegate School seeks 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.

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 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 are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Rights-Respecting-Schools-Award/Childrens-rights/>

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.

- the engagement, participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies
- preparation for entry to the school
- school policies
- breaks 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
- homework
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school or Theatre in Education (TIE).
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare

The roles and responsibilities within our school community

Our Headteacher will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students and visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of and informed about the Equality Policy

- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and report to the Governing Body at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish this information
- ensure that the Senior Leadership team is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it

Our governing body will:

- designate a governor with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy
- ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- support the headteacher in implementing any actions necessary
- engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- evaluate and review the policy annually and the objectives every 4 years.

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this Policy
- provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the Policy
- with the Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
- assist in implementing reviews of this policy as detailed in the SIP.

Our pupils/students will:

- be involved in the development of the Policy and will understand how it relates to them, appropriate to age and ability
- be expected to act in accordance with the Policy
- be encouraged to actively support the Policy.

Our parents/carers will:

- be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the development of the Policy
- have access to the Policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
- be encouraged to actively support the Policy
- be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy
- be informed of any incident related to this Policy which could directly affect their child.

Our school staff will:

- be involved in the development of the Policy
- be fully aware of the Equality Policy and how it relates to them
- understand that this is a whole school issue and support the Equality Policy

- make known any queries or training requirements.

Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:

- Be involved in the development of the Policy
- Be encouraged to support the Policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the Policy.

How we developed our Policy - Participation and Involvement

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/students We gathered pupils' views through School council and also through your PSHE/Citizenship curriculum.
- Our staff

Staff are consulted through staff meeting.

- Our school governors -Through discussion and items at governing body meetings.
- Parents/carers

Parents had the opportunity to contribute through the Think Tank and parent questionnaires sent out electronically and in paper copy. The PFA group contribute.

- Minority, marginalised and potentially vulnerable groups as above and teachers approached and offered to support. Translation and interpreter as required.
- Ongoing: Through our ongoing monitoring systems we will keep dialogue open: non-negotiable booklet and annual parent and pupil surveys.

How we developed our Policy - Using information

We have used data and other information about our school, and Equality Impact assessments (EQIAs) as a common sense measure to determine the effects of a policy, practice or project on different groups. EQIAs help us to analyse whether what we are planning potentially has a differential impact on one or more particular group (either positively or negatively). They help us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted. They help to ensure we meet the diverse needs of our pupils/students and staff and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school life.

Recent EQIAs carried out highlight:

We had external assessment of our inclusive practice which covered all protected characteristics through the Inclusion Quality Mark.

The engagement activities we undertook as outlined above told us:

That there was no negative impact on any protected characteristic.

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.

RAISE online data, incident reporting data. This data tells us that our FSM and SEN pupils do not attend school as frequently as others. All groups of pupils achieve above the national and make excellent progress.

OfSTED inspectors visit us regularly and report on equality issues during our inspection. We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, faith, disability and gender.

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

We use Ofsted Parentview as a way of collecting parent voice and also send out our own questionnaires. These tell us that parents and pupils are happy and feel their child is kept safe in school. Parents have the opportunity to complete these anonymously.

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.

Our school link has strong links with the Behaviour & Attendance Service with whom we are now monitoring attendance on a regular basis. Our links with health partners are strong and we employ a speech therapist for our early years. Sussex Police visit frequently. We will use the Traveller Education and English as an Additional Language Service (TEALS) and East Sussex Equality and Participation team to support pupils.

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.

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.

Commissioned services (buying in services)

Increasingly we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. We work closely with the local authority 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:

- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community?
- If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?

We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality policy and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

Our Staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff (including teachers, teaching assistants, supervisors and student teachers) 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.

There are some specific exceptions to the religion or belief provisions of the Equality Act for employment by schools designated as having a religious character. See Department of Education website for further guidance on this:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/the-equality-act-2010>

We interpret our duties positively; take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

We employ a member of staff with a hearing disability and we have made adjustments to ensure that she hears the fire drill.

Our staff team have undertaken training to help them understand their equality duties/and or the differing needs of protected groups within our school community. We have mechanisms in place to identify areas for development.

Unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work - for example ensuring that applicants for a PE teaching post have the physical capability to carry out the duties.

Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying

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, negative views of disabled people or sexism. 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/students 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.

Our school process for responding to all hate incidents and prejudice based bullying follows our behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy and staff code of conduct. The staff non-negotiable also sets out expectations clearly. We have a bullying incident record. We investigate all allegations and keep a record of these, reporting to governors throughout the year. Any hate or prejudice incidents are reported to county. Information is shared with parents at the earliest opportunity and they have access to records made of the incident. We always seek to actively involve parents in the resolution.

Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

This policy was published on 1.09.2025 It will be actively promoted and disseminated through the website and staff meetings.

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 analyse whether our policy and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular 12 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 the school website