

St Alban's Catholic High School



Equal Opportunities and Accessibility Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body on: 20 June 2022

Recommission Date: June 2023

Section 1 Responsibilities

1.1 Governing body

The reason for adopting the policy is to identify, prevent and redress unfair discrimination against disadvantaged groups. The policy will assist the governing body to address legal, managerial and social issues from the basis of a statement of commitment to equality supported by a more detailed policy and procedures for implementation.

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty:

The general thrust of *The Equality Act 2010* is to make discrimination 'prohibited conduct' and unlawful on the grounds of nine 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. Discrimination under *The Equality Act 2010* can be direct, associative or indirect and the Act also prohibits discrimination by perception and victimisation.

The ways in which discrimination, harassment and victimisation might become illegal depend quite often on the type of protected characteristic. It should also be noted that victimising a student who has protected characteristics or their parents or siblings is also regarded as unlawful. Good practice should ensure that teaching and support staff are constantly able to evaluate what they do, and to receive appropriate support and training in this area.

The school must not discriminate against a child applying to be admitted to the school or to existing staff and students on the grounds of their protected characteristics. Equally, the Public Sector Equality Duty of 2011 places a duty on employers to take account of equality when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

1.2 The Equality Act 2010 combines the various former Acts such as:

- **Sex discrimination** Under *The Equality Act 2010*, direct sex discrimination means that students and employees cannot be treated less favourably according to their gender.

- **Gender reassignment discrimination**

The Equality 2010 Act reminds us that gender reassignment is a process and not an event.

Discrimination in connection with the provision of education on grounds of past, present or proposed gender reassignment is, in the main, unlawful.

- **Sexual orientation discrimination**

Discrimination in connection with the provision of education on grounds of sexual orientation is ordinarily unlawful under the provisions of *The Equality Act 2010*.

- **Race discrimination**

Race as defined in *The Equality Act 2010* includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. Race is essentially a group characteristic, but one racial group can be part of a larger racial group. Discrimination in connection with provision of education on grounds of race is generally unlawful under the Act. Schools have a statutory general duty to promote race equality and eliminate unlawful racial discrimination.

- **Religion or belief discrimination**

In *The Equality Act 2010* religion means any religion, including a lack of religion. Similarly, belief means any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief.

- **Disability discrimination**

The Equality Act 2010 states that schools must make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities and a more specific requirement for students with special educational needs.

- **Accessibility for disabled students**

Schools are expected to improve the ways in which disabled students can access the school's curriculum. There must be a written accessibility plan which should be implemented within a reasonable time.

1.3 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- making sure this policy is readily available and that the governors, staff, students, and their parents and guardians have access to it on the website;
- making sure the equality policy and its procedures are followed;
- making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive advice and support in carrying these out;
- taking appropriate action in cases of harassment or discrimination;
- endeavouring to assess candidates objectively for employment and promotion against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary; complying with obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations, and making reasonable adjustments to standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

1.4 All staff

All staff are responsible for:

- dealing with prejudice-related incidents, and being able to recognise and tackle stereotyping;
- promoting equal opportunities and good relations, and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership;
- taking up training and learning opportunities.

Section 2 Statement of Policy

2.1 In order to make access to the whole curriculum a reality for all students, St Alban's will foster a climate in which positive attitudes to equality, cultural diversity and special needs of all kinds are actively promoted.

"All people are equal in the sight of God and should be accorded the respect and dignity due to the children of God."

"St. Alban's Catholic High school seeks to be a living Christian community in which effective learning takes place. By recognising Jesus Christ in each one of us we aim to develop fully the unique talents of all members of the school community." (Mission Statement)

2.2 Policy Aims

The school is committed to the following aims:

- All members of the community, whatever their role or function, status or ability should be held in equal esteem;
- Age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership shall not be a consideration in the recruitment of staff, but simply the matter of qualification, experience and suitability to the proper discharge of relevant duties;
- To ensure a high quality of education environment and equality for all;
- To support the development of personal and cultural identities;
- To prepare all students for full participation in society;
- Diversity arising from any of the protected characteristics should be regarded as enriching the total community.

2.3 Objectives

The policy will be promoted in the following ways:

- All members of the school will be aligned with these aims and will agree to support them, through the Mission statement and Behaviour Principles contained in the Behaviour Policy;
- Each individual's needs will be carefully assessed in the light of their abilities, talents, previous and present experience and their full entitlement to educational and spiritual provision made available to them;
- By joining together frequently in the celebration of the Eucharist;
- By being alert to, and reporting, any prejudice-related incidents by students and others;
- By ensuring that teaching materials do not themselves communicate prejudices and attitudes, and challenge these;
- By encouraging a pride in, and a sharing of national customs and practice;
- By encouraging all members of the community to benefit from culture and practice of other nations;
- By preparing students to take their place in a multi-cultural and diverse society;
- By confirming the Christian message of equality of all in the sight of God and the obligation to help and support those of the community who are weakest and most in need.
- By promoting the core British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

2.4 Implementation

The wider curriculum provides opportunities for students to take a holistic view of their own learning, progress, behaviour and development, and to develop self-esteem, confidence and motivation in all aspects of their lives. Staff are sensitive to issues in cross cultural communication and interaction, which can cause incorrect perceptions and misunderstandings. Our school endorses the definition of Inclusive education where Inclusion is the process of taking necessary steps to ensure that every young person is given equality of opportunity to develop socially, to learn and to enjoy community life. Equally, staff and prospective employees can have the expectation to be treated fairly and inclusively.

There are structures and procedures for ensuring that staff know and share relevant information about a student's personal and home circumstances and for ensuring that confidentiality is safeguarded. Teaching and support staff develop shared views and standards in relation to student behaviour and are aware of ways in which their own expectations and actions may influence the behaviour and learning of students.

Staff and other adults at the school are seen to have mutual respect in their interactions and relationships with each other. Students have opportunities to take responsibility for administrative tasks in classrooms and in school organisation, including responsibility for younger students and welcoming visitors to the school.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluating

Data gathered is reported to the Governing Body through the Headteacher's reports. The overall structures and policies, the class and departmental arrangements, will be kept under regular review to ensure that no individual adult or student is subject, in any way, to prejudice or discrimination of any sort in terms of their membership of the school community.

2.6 The Governing Body

- Will adhere to fair employment practices and procedures in the recruitment of new staff, and also with regard to internal appointments and promotions. With regards to staff appointments where the role specifically requires the post holder to be a committed Catholic Schedule 9, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 applies;
- The Governing Body endeavours to ensure that its own membership is adequately representative of the communities that the school serves;
- When formulating and reviewing the school's annual budget, Governors take account of equality issues and allocate earmarked funds according to School Improvement needs e.g. with regard to staff training and development, the use of support staff, the involvement of parents and the provision of extra teaching;
- The Governors receive and consider reports relating to equality, prejudice-related incidents and cultural diversity and make recommendations and decisions as appropriate.

2.7 Staffing and organisation

- In-service and staff development programmes are centrally concerned with ensuring high quality education for all, supporting the development of cultural identities and preparing students for full participation in society;
- Staff culture is open and positive in its treatment of equality and diversity issues;
- The curriculum provides opportunities for teaching and learning about equality, cultural diversity and equal opportunity. It provides equally for the needs of all students and takes steps to ensure that possible discrimination is avoided in the use of sanctions and rewards;
- There is a programme of support, as appropriate, for ensuring that bilingual, EAL and students with physical disabilities and SEND have access to the full curriculum.

2.8 Parents and the community

- The school will investigate and record all prejudice-related incidents;
- Parents from minority groups and those with protected characteristics are proportionately involved as other parents in activities such as representation on the governing body and the PTA, attendance at consultation evenings, fundraising and other school activities;
- The school's arrangements for receiving visitors are appropriate and accessible to parents of all backgrounds;
- Information material for parents is reader friendly and will be made available in languages other than English, as required;
- Members of the community are frequently involved in the curriculum of the school e.g. giving talks, assisting with careers discussions for example.

2.9 Out of lesson times

- All students are aware that there are school rules prohibiting any form of prejudicial harassment, abuse, graffiti and name calling in the playgrounds, corridors and going to and from school;
- All staff, including support staff are familiar with formal procedures for recording and dealing with prejudice-related incidents;
- All staff are vigilant with regard to behaviour amongst students, and ensure that they are as familiar as possible with students' experiences of bullying;
- Students are aware of principles and expectations relating to behaviour, and school's non-acceptance of prejudice;
- Staff and support staff accept responsibility for helping to ensure that leisure areas encourage and promote positive and co-operative behaviour amongst students.

2.10 Pastoral Support

- Pastoral support provides opportunities for students to take an holistic view of their own learning, progress, behaviour and development, and to develop self-esteem, confidence and motivation in all aspects of their lives, so that there is no artificial split between the academic and pastoral aspects of the curriculum;
- There are structures for ensuring that staff know and share relevant information about students' personal and home circumstances including details of home nationality and home language spoken and for ensuring that confidentiality is safe guarded;
- All staff develop shared views and standards in relation to student behaviour and are aware of ways in which their own expectations and actions may influence the learning and behaviour of students;
- All adults at the school are seen to have mutual respect in their interactions with each other;
- All students have opportunities to take responsibility for administrative tasks in classrooms and in school organisation, including responsibilities for younger students and welcoming visitors to the school;
- Measures are taken to monitor and deal with disaffected students before it becomes expressed in unacceptable behaviour and truancy.

2.11 Teaching and Learning

- All students are aware that staff have very high expectations of them and that they are continually challenged to reach higher standards;
- A range of evidence-based teaching styles will be employed, including those that foster motivation and a sense of personal worth by drawing on student's own personal experience;

- Staff foster a positive atmosphere of mutual respect and trust amongst students, in which all students feel affirmed and feel safe and unthreatened and which in turn develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- Displays and resources contain positive, non-stereotypical and challenging images in relation to the protected characteristics;
- Staff challenge stereotypes and prejudice whenever they become apparent, report these appropriately, and propose more open, informed opinions.

Section 3 Disability

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides a single piece of legislation covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. Schools and Local Authorities have to carry out accessibility planning for disabled students. The duties are the same as those in the previous Disability Discrimination legislation and have been replicated in the act.

3.3 Our school's equality accessibility plans are aimed at:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum;
- Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled students to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided;
- Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled students
- Ensuring that employment process and procedure is in line with our aims and objectives.

3.4 We recognise the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and will regularly review them. The definition of disability under the law is a wide one. A disabled person is someone who has:

"Physical or mental impairment that has an adverse, substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

3.6 This definition includes people with a Hearing or Visual Impairment, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, mental health issues and incontinence. People with ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Downs Syndrome and Hydrocephalus are included. Medical conditions such as Cystic Fibrosis, severe Asthma, Diabetes, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Sickle Cell Anaemia and HIV are deemed disabilities. **This list is indicative and not exhaustive.** Facial disfigurement, severe Dyslexia, gross obesity and diagnosed eating disorders are all included.

3.7 If a person has been disabled in the past (for example, cancer recoverers and people with a history of mental illness) they are still covered by the legislation for the rest of their life.

3.8 In considering appropriate plans we will consider the three areas of improving access to:

- The physical environment;
- Access to education and facilities;
- Access to information usually provided in written form.

3.9 Some key themes to consider when planning the physical environment are:

- Needs for personal care;
- Requirements of space for hoists;
- Installation of handrails;
- Implications of classrooms on different floors;
- Accessibility of the lift;
- Availability and Training to use Evac chairs;
- Practicality of powered wheelchair movement around the site;
- Allocated parking spaces with room for tail lifts;
- Needs for any specialist furniture.

3.10 Access to the curriculum.

It is the schools ethos to be inclusive and deliver on access to the curriculum. Practical measures, such as flexibility on rooming lessons, allow access to be possible. Some activities may be inappropriate but the school will endeavour to find a suitable, practical alternative. Access to educational visits has been enhanced by an inclusive element to financial planning. This enables the school to make use of coaches and mini buses adapted for wheelchair users.

3.11 Access to written information.

The school will endeavour to plan for, and respond to, the needs to those with difficulty accessing written material. Awareness of use of font and size, along with use of coloured paper increases accessibility. Ensuring signage around the school is accessible to all is a helpful exercise.

3.12 Access arrangements

The School recognises that some students will meet the criteria for access arrangements in exams, due to specific difficulties which result in them having significantly greater difficulty in learning than peers of the same age and that they have a long term and substantial disability. In putting access arrangements in place, the school is bound to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and with Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ) Regulations.

3.13 The School is therefore only able to put access arrangements in place, where these arrangements are specifically recommended in a formal report carried out by a Local Authority Educational Psychologist, by a Medical practitioner, or an appropriately qualified assessor appointed by the school within the time frame stipulated by JCQ. Assessments must demonstrate in quantitative and qualitative measures that the Student meets JCQ criteria for access arrangements as set out in the JCQ guidelines published annually.

3.14 JCQ adjusts its regulations periodically and the School is bound to comply with the current regulations. The SENDCO or the Exams Officer attends training on a regular basis, to ensure they are appraised of the JCQ regulations for each academic year. As advised by JCQ, the School will exercise its judgement regarding a student's eligibility for access arrangements. In addition, the School is also required to gather qualitative evidence that the access arrangements reflect the candidate's needs and their normal way of working within school.

3.15 Following teacher advice, the Learning Support Department will conduct reviews and assessments with each student, in order to gather the evidence that an arrangement is appropriate and used as part of normal classroom practice. A selection of the student's scripts will be kept in the Learning Support Department files as evidence of need and use, should JCQ inspectors request this.

3.16 In Years 7 to 9 teachers may allow supportive arrangements according to advice from the Learning Support Department and any other professional recommendations.

3.17 Formal Support Measures

a. Use of extra time

In compliance with JCQ Guidelines: The School will permit the use of up to 25% extra time under the following conditions:

- There must be evidence of a substantial and long-term disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010), which places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage when working under timed conditions;
- Examples of this would include an identified specific learning difficulty resulting in below average scores for speed of writing, speed of reading, processing speed, working memory or spelling. JCQ defines 'below average' as a standard score of 84 or below, or two standard scores between 85 – 89;
- There must be evidence of this need in the form of an up to date medical or Local Authority Educational psychologist's report, or a report by an appropriately qualified professional holding a current practising certificate and using JCQ approved standardised tests;
- In compliance with JCQ regulations, this report must have been carried out no earlier than year 9. Reports that are out of date will not be accepted as evidence of need. The School will comply with JCQ regulations in reviewing the need for, and use of, extra time at GCE AS levels and A levels;
- The School will agree to apply for extra time for public examinations on the basis of the evidence above, and provided there is also evidence that this is the candidate's normal way of working in exams and timed tests. To this end, the School will collect evidence of the need for, and use of, extra time in internal exams.

b. Use of a word processor

In compliance with JCQ guidelines: The School will permit the use of a word processor in examinations, where this is the candidate's normal mode of working within the school. The spell check facility must be disabled and the arrangement can only be put in place if:

- He/She has difficulty writing legibly;
- He/She has identified specific learning difficulties resulting in planning and organisational difficulties when writing;*
- He/She has a medical condition affecting handwriting;*
- He/She has a physical disability;*
- He/She has a sensory impairment;*

In all of the instances asterisked*, there will need to be evidence of need in the form of a medical or educational psychologist's report, or a report by an appropriately qualified professional. The School will collect evidence of the candidate's need for, and use of, word processing in lessons and in exams. Candidates will not be permitted to word process their exams simply because they:

- Prefer to type
- Can work faster on a word processor.

c. Use of a scribe

Use of a scribe for GCSE/GCE examinations will only be allowed where a student cannot write or type at a sufficient speed to record their answers even with the extra time allowed. The use of a scribe must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and the school will collect evidence of the candidate's need for, and use of a scribe in lessons and exams.

d. Reader

Use of a reader for GCSE/GCE examinations will only be allowed where a student has learning difficulties and an assessment that indicates a below average reading accuracy score or reading speed score. A reader will not be allowed to read questions or texts in papers (or sections of papers) that are testing reading.

e. Other Access Arrangements

The School will consider the need and eligibility for other access arrangements on a case-by-case basis, according to the need for and appropriateness of the arrangement.

Section 4 Guidelines for dealing with incidents

4.1 Definition of a Prejudice-Related Incident

The governing body endorses the definition of a 'prejudice-related incident' as set out in the Suffolk Local Authority advice and guidance document:

*"A prejudice-related incident is any incident which is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be prejudiced towards an individual, due to one or more of the protected characteristics of age, disability, faith, gender identity/reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity status, race, sex or sexual orientation"*¹

In line with the Equality Act 2010 these incidents could involve:

- *Direct discrimination* – where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic
- *Associative discrimination* – this is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic
- *Discrimination by perception* – this is direct discrimination against someone because others think that they possess a particular protected characteristic. They do not necessarily have to possess the characteristic, just be perceived to.

- *Indirect discrimination* – this can occur when you have a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a person with a particular protected characteristic.
- *Victimisation* – this occurs when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or grievance under this legislation.

Perception of Discrimination- Whilst the perception of a victim is important, it must be reasonable to amount to discrimination.

4.2 All prejudiced behaviour should be treated as a serious matter and handled accordingly. It is crucially important that the member of staff who first encounters the incident shows firm disapproval and takes positive action to deal with the situation. A failure to respond could be seen as condoning discrimination and prejudiced behaviour and could discourage students and parents from reporting incidents and sharing their concerns with staff.

Prompt, appropriate and consistent responses from all members of staff can encourage students who might otherwise suffer in silence to report incidents and share their concerns and worries.

In dealing with the perpetrators of a prejudice-related incident, it is important that it is the behaviour which is disapproved of, and not the students themselves.

4.3 Prejudice-related behaviours can be complex and subtle, and staff should be vigilant for a range of incidents including: verbal name calling/mock/teasing; written and textual materials and information on social networking sites; graffiti and drawings; physical violence; intimidation/coercion; extortion; taking/damaging possessions; deliberately excluding individual from social groups and/or activities; inciting others to participate in prejudice-related behaviours; spreading rumours; all forms of Cyber-bullying (including e-mail, phone, text, internet, social media); and mate crime (exploitation or abuse from someone considered to be a friend).

4.4 The Governing Body support 'The 4Rs Approach to Responding':

1. *Recognise* – identify that an incident has occurred
2. *Responsibility to respond* – take responsibility for responding according to school/LA policy
3. *Record* – complete monitoring log according to school/LA guidelines
4. *Report* – share information about the incident with relevant people and agencies.

4.5 Once an incident has been identified, the following procedure should be implemented:

- Report the incident to the identified lead who will record in the prejudice-related incidents log;
- The incident should be sensitively investigated, with both victims and perpetrators being spoken to in order to identify the background and particular circumstances which led up to the incident; its nature, and the motivation behind it;
- It should be clearly explained to perpetrators why the behaviour was unacceptable and hurtful or offensive;
- Assurance should be sought that students understand how the behaviour was discriminatory, why it was wrong, and that it will not be repeated;
- The Restorative Justice Approach should be used as appropriate;
- Once investigated the incident should be referred, where appropriate, to a senior member of staff for disciplinary action or seek police involvement if the incident involves criminal activity (in accordance with the School Behaviour Policy);
- A meeting with parents may help in order to make it clear to them that such behaviour is unacceptable and that further disciplinary action will be taken if there is any repetition;
- In appropriate cases, considering the use of positive strategies other than sanctions and punishment which might help and encourage the student to overcome his/her prejudices and to desist from engaging in similar behaviour in the future;

4.6 Supporting the Victim/s

It is important to ensure that action taken to deal with prejudice-related incidents includes support for the victim/s. It is likely that a child or young person who has been subjected to discriminatory behaviour will be feeling hurt and in need of reassurance. A caring and sensitive approach to those feelings at the time of the incident is one of the most tangible and effective ways in which a member of staff can demonstrate the commitment of the school to combating prejudice.

Effective action may include:

- Speak separately to the victim providing support and reassurance;
- Offer the student the opportunity to talk about the incident and how she/he feels;
- Recognise that a student may be reluctant to talk about the experience at the time but may be willing to do this later;
- Explain what action the school has taken or will take to deal with the perpetrator;
- Reassure the student about the school's commitment to challenge and counter prejudice and encourage him/her to report any other future incidents immediately to a member of staff;
- Ask the student if they have been the victim on previous occasions;
- Record the student as a victim of prejudice using the prejudice-related incident log;
- Inform the parents of the incident, explaining what has happened and what action has been taken by the school and reassuring them that the school will take steps to prevent any repetition.
- In cases of repeat victimisation ensure a review date is set to check the incidents have stopped.

4.7 Care needs to be taken where an allegation of prejudiced behaviour proves, on investigation, to be groundless. The student, student or parent who made the complaint needs to have the situation explained to them with due sensitivity in order to ensure that they are not discouraged from expressing any similar concerns in the future.

4.8 Following up a Prejudice-Related Incident

It is often helpful, once the immediate situation has been dealt with, for staff to reflect on the incident, to consider what further action may be necessary in respect of the perpetrator and victim and to see if there are any lessons to be learned from the experience.

Effective action may include:

- Setting a review date for key people to be consulted and to check if the behaviour has stopped;
- Consider the actions of the perpetrator to see if there were any underlying factors which might have made them behave the way they did;
- Monitor the perpetrator's future behaviour;
- Inform other members of staff, for example, Leadership Team, Key Stage Manager, Student Support Manager, Class/Form teacher;
- Check to see if there are any times in the school day or any places in the school where students feel particularly vulnerable;
- Consider if it would be beneficial to discuss the issues further in a school assembly or class discussion. This requires careful judgement. It may expose the victim in an embarrassing and uncomfortable way and could be treated inappropriately by other students. On the other hand it may be an opportunity to develop, in students, positive attitudes towards equality and diversity and for them to understand the determination of the school to combat prejudice;
- Ask other members of staff to keep a protective eye on known victim/s and take positive steps over time to build up their trust and to encourage them to report any further incidents;
- All members of the school community to be on alert for, and aware of, students who may be suffering in silence.

Section 5 Planning and Developing Policy

5.1 Equality and diversity are part of the School Improvement Plan and will be assessed through:

- the schools' monitoring and review procedures
- analysis of exam results
- analysis of exclusions
- analysis of behaviour records
- analysis of school commendations system
- interim data collection analysis

5.2 Social deprivation

It is widely recognised that the link between social deprivation and achievement suggests that students who come from less economically sound backgrounds do less well at school. The school monitors the progress of these students via the use of Pupil Premium Funds and those designated to be 'vulnerable'. The school supports the notion of equal access to high quality provision and actively seeks to support the progress of these students via the Pupil Premium.

Signed by J McCall, Chair of Governors:

Date:
