

Wickford 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. Equal opportunities, in a school situation, 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 Wickford Primary School takes its commitment to the duty to promote community cohesion very seriously, and we have agreed a Community Cohesion statement 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 Wickford 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 pupils 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, sexuality, family and social circumstances, will find safety and respect for themselves, their families and their traditions. Our policy should 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 pupils have the opportunity to reach their potential in all areas of school
- ✓ life;
- ✓ ensure that parents and pupils 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 pupils and welcomes diversity.

We seek to promote the achievement of all pupils. Teaching staff make time to praise children for their behaviour, contributions and their work. Each week we hold House assemblies where children are publicly awarded for achievement in all areas of school life. All pupils 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 pupils 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 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.

Playground behaviour is monitored and unacceptable behaviour challenged to ensure that pupils are safe and free from harassment. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with immediately. We have developed systems to deal with playground incidents and with racism. These are followed by all staff. Offensive remarks or behaviour based upon prejudice or misinformation are always challenged.

4 An Inclusive Curriculum

At Wickford Primary School pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils' diverse learning needs;
- 3 overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

The focus is far wider than disability and special educational needs. It includes pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups including

travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

An awareness of multi-cultural issues informs all our planning. Through geography and history topics, pupils learn about different societies, environments and cultures. We have friendship links with a school in Uganda. 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 pupils' experiences and try to make lessons and activities interesting and accessible to all.

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

Observing inclusive teaching strategies is a key element of the Senior Leadership Team's annual programme of monitoring.

5 Classroom Management and Organisation

All class teachers develop strategies to ensure appropriate access to classroom equipment and resources which include computer timetables, rotating activities and providing independent choice time.

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

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

6 Pupil Welfare and Guidance

Pupils 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 education.

There are planned opportunities, often arising from literacy and humanity 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.

The phone number for children's support agency networks are displayed.

7 Safeguarding and Child Protection

Our utmost priority is the safety and wellbeing of the children in our care. The school based Designated Child Protection Officer, the Headteacher, 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 Headteacher, as Designated Child Protection Officer, 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 Headteacher 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 have a collection of dual language texts and also borrow books as needed from the Essex County Council Ethnic Minority Achievement Service.

Children are encouraged to challenge stereotyping, prejudice and omissions in existing resource material.

We aim to meet specific resource needs for pupils 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. Further details of some relevant legal provisions are set out in section 15 of this policy.

The school is concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

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 in the Headteacher's office for reference.

Teaching and support staff are encouraged to further their professional careers by attending courses suited to their posts.

10 Parents, Carers and the Community

We acknowledge and support the varied family circumstances in which our pupils live and we try to ensure that all carers and parents are always welcomed at our school. A weekly 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. In addition specific letters are sent home each term to inform parents of work being undertaken in their children's classes and in advance of class trips.

A formal written report of children's progress is provided once a year. We will give help with understanding, or translate, any of the above if necessary.

Language can sometimes be used to exclude certain groups, therefore, we aim to use appropriate and accessible language in all written and verbal correspondence.

We hold two official Parent Consultation Evenings each year. Parents' commitments and availability are taken into consideration: therefore, as well as a parents' evening, appointments can be at mutually convenient times to ensure parents can meet their child's teacher. Parents are also invited to make appointments with class teachers throughout the term to discuss particular concerns or issues.

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 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 Equal Opportunities Affecting Particular Groups

There are times when an individual or group of people need additional support to assist them in reaching their full potential. It may be that a left-handed child is having difficulty using scissors, or that a particular racial group is being excluded from an area of the playground. It is our aim to recognise these areas for concern and to act accordingly. We have identified particular groups and we aim to address equality in the following ways:

Class

The school values all its staff and pupils. We are not judgmental of our families regarding their employment status and all people are valued regardless of social background and social or economic needs.

We recognise that some families have difficulty paying for school trips and arrangements can be made to provide support. We have a system of collecting dinner money which is sensitive and does not cause embarrassment for those receiving free provision.

It is recognised that homework can be more difficult for pupils with little space or extra responsibility at home. Staff are sensitive to these issues and invite parents to discuss difficulties so that an understanding exists between parent and teacher.

Gender

The school recognises that girls and women have been, and in many cases are still, discriminated against. We specifically encourage girls to achieve in curriculum areas such as Science, Information Communications Technology and Design and Technology which have in the past been dominated by male students. We actively encourage boys in activities which have traditionally been seen as in the female domain.

Topics are carefully chosen and planned so as to engage boys and girls in equal measure. Where appropriate, teachers may organise single sex groups to ensure equal access to equipment and to encourage individuals to take a more positive role within the group.

We encourage all our boys and girls to be assertive and articulate and to be proud of their abilities.

Resources should portray women and men, boys and girls in a wide range of roles and language used should always be non-sexist.

Language

Bilingualism is seen as a positive advantage.

Bilingual children receive additional support from a Learning Assistant. Where necessary, this is funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant.

The Inclusion Manager and HLTA work with groups of children focusing upon the development of reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. We have access to support networks within the Local Authority for the needs of specific ethnic groups.

We understand that children need time in which to feel secure and that they may experience a "silent" period. We recognise, however, that some bilingual pupils may also have special educational needs.

Children are encouraged and given opportunities to use their first language.

Bilingual pupils work with monolingual pupils who provide good role models of language use at their own level.

Learning Ability

The school is proud to be a true "community school" and welcomes and provides for pupils of all levels of attainment. We recognise that all pupils are entitled to follow a broad and balanced curriculum and we aim to ensure that all pupils have access to such a curriculum.

Much time and care is put into the identification of children with educational needs, the planning, implementing and assessing of individual educational programmes (IEP). Children with an IEP or a statement of need are treated with equal respect and value. All staff have high expectations of all pupils.

There is a wide range of resources available to cater for pupils of all abilities and work is often differentiated so that pupils can achieve personal goals.

Physical Ability

The school welcomes staff and pupils with differing physical abilities.

We try to use resources which challenge stereotypical views of those with different physical abilities.

The terminology used to describe forms of physical ability should not be offensive.

Staff are made aware of pupils' individual needs and how to cope with them (e.g. asthma attacks) in a safe, sensitive and practical way.

For more information about how the school meets the needs of children with differing learning or physical abilities, please see the Special Educational Needs Policy, Staff Handbook and Health and Safety Policy.

Race

The school recognises that Wickford is predominantly White British. However, we know that the Britain consists of a racially diverse population and recognise that our multi-cultural society enriches schools in a positive way. All staff and pupils are encouraged to adopt a respectful awareness of other cultures and languages, to be thoughtful, tactful and to examine and be critical of their own racial prejudices. It is important to remember that racism can take place on a conscious and unconscious level.

Resources should give a positive view of our multi-racial society and encourage respect for people as individuals. Resources should present a global view of the world.

Refugees and Travellers

Refugees and travellers are welcomed in our school and we try to adopt an understanding of their own personal situation.

We are developing ways in which we can support families who are new to the area or have moved many times. We understand that children who join mid-year may need support settling and families who may have fled their countries may have experienced great trauma. We aim to be sympathetic, non-judgmental and welcoming.

The ECC Traveller Service offers guidelines, advice and points of contact. We strive to ensure that all families are welcomed and are offered support and advice and that children in our school feel safe and achieve in all areas of school life.

Some refugees and travellers will only spend a short time in our school. It is our duty to ensure that pupils have a positive social and educational experience, whatever the time period they spend in our school.

Religion

We welcome families of any religious or non-religious persuasion. All individuals have the right to express their religious views and practices within the constraints of the National Curriculum, whilst maintaining respect for the belief of others.

Lessons and assemblies regarding religion give pupils opportunities to learn about the variety of world religions. Pupils are encouraged to accept and respect a variety of religious and cultural views within the religions studied. Pupils are encouraged to challenge stereotypes and discuss diversity.

Displays and resources should reflect the diversity of religions.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from R.E. lessons and collective worship.

Sexuality

The school welcomes parents, carers and staff, whatever their sexual orientation.

Mental health and drug/alcohol abuse

The school is sympathetic to the needs of families with mental health issues or drug or alcohol abuse. Information given to teachers is treated with sensitivity and only passed on to other members of staff who have contact with the child and may need to be aware of a particular home situation as part of our commitment to safeguarding.

When teaching children about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, teachers are sensitive to the experiences of children in their class. We aim to give factual information in a balanced non-judgemental way. We encourage children to discuss issues and develop their own opinions.

Offensive language is challenged and staff explain why certain language is considered offensive to groups of people.

12 Dealing with Harassment

Harassment on account of ability, gender, race, religion, sexuality or social background are unjust and totally unacceptable. Harassment can take many forms including verbal or physical abuse, name calling, exclusion from groups and games, unwanted looks or comments, jokes and graffiti.

We aim to take all incidents of harassment seriously and the school has a statutory responsibility to deal with racial and sexual harassment.

We have developed a clear procedure for dealing with complaints and grievances including those regarding harassment. For more information, please see the Complaints Procedure.

13 Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy was updated in the January 2019 and will be reviewed biannually or as necessary.

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 and Skills, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and other bodies.

Education Reform Act 1988

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

Education Act 1944/Children Act 1989

Pupils 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 pupils. 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.

Note: Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 states that an LEA 'shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality'. However the subsequent circular (12/88) from the department of the Environment states:

'Section 28 does not affect the activities of school governors, nor of teachers. It will not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, nor the counselling of pupils concerned about their sexuality'.

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

For the purposes of the Race Relations Act, 'gypsies' (Travellers) are defined as a racial group.

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

An exception is made for admissions to single sex schools, though the facilities available at such schools should not be less favourable than those at another schools.

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 pupils less favourably than non-disabled pupils and to take reasonable steps to remedy substantial disadvantage to disabled pupils. 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.