

THE HERMITAGE SCHOOL EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Hermitage School's mission statement is:

'The Hermitage Learning Community strives for excellence. Each member has value in this supportive environment and is entitled to opportunities which develop skills for effective Lifelong Learning. We encourage, recognise and celebrate all aspects of achievement from all members of our learning community.'

The school therefore is committed to creating, maintaining and promoting a working environment and a community where we have the opportunity to receive quality services regardless of any differences that we may have. We have a commitment to social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all. In order to substantiate this, the school applied for and was credited with the Inclusion Quality Charter Mark in July 2009. We aim to provide an environment which is free from bullying, harassment and prejudice.

Aims and Objectives

The school wishes to continue developing an organisational culture which strengthens equality of opportunity. This exists when:

1. It is understood that everyone is unique and everyone has different needs
2. Equality of access exists for all
3. Individual choices are widened
4. Everyone feels happy, safe and secure in an environment which does not disadvantage or discriminate against anyone
5. Stereotypes are challenged to ensure everyone has an equal chance to develop as they wish
6. Individual and community needs are responded to the benefit of everyone
7. Adequate resources exist to meet everyone's needs

The school is committed to promoting a just society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live free from discrimination and prejudice and although aware of our legal obligations, we want to develop a culture of celebrating diversity regardless of legislation and valuing the differences we all have and the tremendous contribution we can all make, both to the organisation and in providing appropriate and effective services to the whole of the community.

Consequently, the aims of this policy are:

1. To ensure that all members of the school community feel happy, safe and secure
2. To ensure that equality of access exists for everyone
3. To promote equality of opportunity regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexuality or socio-economic background
4. To actively develop the self-esteem and self-respect of all members of the school community

5. To ensure that educational provision is relevant to our increasingly diverse society
6. To ensure that the curriculum actively promotes equality of opportunity
7. To actively challenge all forms of bullying, harassment, prejudice and stereotyping
8. To actively engage the support and commitment of the whole school community in achieving the above aims

Recent Legislation and best practice

In promoting equality and diversity, it is important that the staff and governing body are aware of recent legislation of which the most significant are:

- 1970 Equal Pay Act
- 1975 Sex Discrimination Act
- 1976 Race Relations Act
- 1988 Education Reform Act
- 1995 Disability Discrimination Act
- 1998 Human Rights Act
- 1999 Macpherson Report into the Stephen Lawrence Murder Inquiry
- 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act
- 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
- 2002 Statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality
- 2004 Protection of Vulnerable Adults
- 2006 Equality Act
- 2006 Sexual Orientation Regulations
- 2006 and 2007 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations and Amendments

Guidelines – Disability

Students with disabilities/learning difficulties/special needs will:

- Have complete access to all the facilities and resources available within the school
- Receive additional support to ensure that they fulfil their potential
- Be integrated with, and educated alongside, other students
- Have access to the same broad, balanced and relevant curriculum as other students
- Be involved in the decisions being made about their care and education

The school is:

- Committed to early identification of emotional and behavioural difficulties before such difficulties lead to underachievement, disaffection and exclusion
- Committed to early intervention, target-setting and regular monitoring of students with disabilities/learning difficulties/special needs
- Always seeking to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that students with disabilities /learning difficulties/special needs benefit fully from their time in school
- Dedicated to ensuring that staff take part regularly in training about disability/learning difficulties/special needs

Guidelines – Gender

Irrespective of gender, all students will:

- Have access to the same broad, balanced and relevant curriculum
- Be expected to do as well as they possibly can
- Be expected to behave as well as they possibly can
- Be expected to work together in a constructive and positive manner
- Be discouraged from using sexist language, and be supported and commended when they challenge such language

As a school, we will:

- Ensure that neither gender dominates any area of the school, the curriculum or the extra-curricular activities to the detriment of the other
- Ensure that all resources portray both genders in a positive and non-stereotypical way
- Continue to monitor achievement by gender. If differences based on gender are identified, appropriate action will be taken to redress the imbalance

Guidelines – Race and Ethnicity

- The curriculum will reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of society locally, regionally and nationally
- Students will have opportunities to study issues to do with intolerance, prejudice, racism, racial discrimination and religious prejudice
- Resources will portray members of all cultural and ethnic groups in ways which are positive and non-stereotypical
- Community languages other than English will be valued and promoted
- The dietary needs of all students will be met
- Achievement, attendance and exclusions will be monitored by ethnicity. If differences based on ethnicity are identified, appropriate action will be taken to redress the imbalance
- Members of all cultural and ethnic groups will be welcomed and valued by the school community
- All racist incidents will be dealt with in an effective and consistent manner
- When posts in school become vacant, we will encourage applications from all groups within our increasingly diverse society

Guidelines – Religion and Belief

- The School curriculum in general, and RE in particular, will be used to value and celebrate diversity based on religion and belief
- Daily acts of collective worship will be used to promote equality of opportunity irrespective of religion or belief
- All students will be given opportunities to meet their religious needs, especially at the time of important festivals
- Students will be discouraged from using offensive language based on religion or belief, and commended when they challenge such language
- Resources will reflect people subscribing to a variety of religions and beliefs
- Resources will show people of all religions and beliefs engaged in non-stereotypical roles and activities
- People of all religions and beliefs will be encouraged to play an active role in school life, perhaps as governors
- As far as is possible, our staff team will reflect the variety of religions and beliefs that exist locally and nationally

Guidelines – Age and Sexuality

- Resources will reflect the variety of families that exist in Britain today
- Resources will show people of all ages engaged in non-stereotypical roles and activities
- Where appropriate, the School curriculum will be used to value and celebrate diversity based on age and sexuality
- Daily acts of collective worship will be used to promote equality of opportunity irrespective of age or sexuality
- Students will be discouraged from using offensive language about age and sexuality, and be commended and supported when they challenge such language
- People will be welcomed and valued no matter their age or sexuality
- Appropriate use will be made of local authority support services to ensure that all students fulfil their potential

Guidelines – Socio-economic background

- The school should foster social, personal and economic ambition within its students
- This school should ensure that each of the Every Child Matters outcomes are fulfilled for each child
- Teaching and learning should embed ambition right across the school and drive improvement
- The school should actively seek to engage parents and carers from a wide range of society and ensure that they are included in its values and ethos

MONITORING - Guidelines

It is recommended that The School Leadership Team models good practice in this area and:

- Develops Equality of Opportunity knowledge, demonstrating competency in promoting equality issues, by appraisal review and establishing equality objectives within departments.
- Ensures that all employees are aware of their responsibilities, the law and policies on equal opportunities issues.
- Ensures grievances are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner.
- Ensures that proper records of employment decisions are maintained and that regular reviews are carried out regarding employment practices.
- Guards against possible prejudice or preconceptions.

The School should also consider the following questions:

- Are staff from ethnic minorities, both genders and staff with disabilities fairly represented in all grades across the school?
- Are posts/special tasks and training/development opportunities apportioned fairly?
- Do you encourage appropriately qualified staff, from under-represented groups to apply for promotion and career development?

- Do part-time or job share staff get the same opportunities as those available to full-time staff?
- Have you fully considered accommodating alternative working patterns, including job-sharing and part-time working?
- Have you obtained all the necessary equipment or other facilities for any members of the school community with disabilities?
- Do you assess performance and potential only on merit and without regard to assumptions or stereotypes?
- Are you alert to the need to identify and address any behaviour which could cause offence or create an atmosphere of harassment to any member of the school community?
- Do you deal promptly and thoroughly, taking advice when necessary, with any complaints of discrimination or harassment, or any other offensive behaviour?
- Do you encourage the school to contribute to monitoring exercises, which collect data about equality of opportunity issues i.e. ethnic origin or disability questionnaires?

Due date for review: September 2010