

A model school policy statement

Introductory note

This model statement has been adapted slightly from one which was developed in Derbyshire in the period 2007–08, and published in 2009. There is fuller information about the background in notes at the end.

Legal framework

1. We welcome our duties under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005; the Race Relations 1976 as amended by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000; the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006; and the expectation in the Equality Bill 2009 that we should promote equality, diversity and good relations in relation to age (as appropriate), faith and religion, gender reassignment and sexual and gender identity.
2. We welcome our duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion.
3. We welcome the proposals set out in *Equality Bill: making it work*, published by the Government Equalities Office in June 2009, that from 2011 onwards we should publish a statement of equality objectives for our school and should report on progress towards achieving them
4. We recognise these duties are essential for achieving the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters framework, and that they reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Guiding principles

5. In fulfilling the legal obligations cited above, we are guided by seven principles:

Principle 1: All learners are of equal value.

We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents and carers, as of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and gender identity
- whatever their sexual identity.

Principle 2: We recognise and respect difference.

Treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and

background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- sexual identity.

Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment.

Principle 4: We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- girls and boys, women and men.

Principle 6: We consult and involve widely

People affected by a policy or activity should be consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. We consult and involve:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, and girls and boys.
- Gay people as well as straight.

Principle 7: Society as a whole should benefit

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, girls and boys
- gay people as well as straight.

Action plans

6. We recognise that the actions resulting from a policy statement such as this are what make a difference.
7. Every three years, accordingly, we draw up an action plan within the framework of the overall school improvement plan and self-evaluation form (SEF), setting out the specific equality objectives we shall pursue. The objectives which we identify take into account national and local priorities and issues, as appropriate.
8. We review our action plan annually and report annually on progress towards achieving the equality objectives we have identified.

The curriculum

9. We keep each curriculum subject or area under review in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the seven principles set out in paragraph 5 above.

Ethos and organisation

10. We ensure the principles listed in paragraph 5 above apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:
 - pupils' progress, attainment and achievement
 - pupils' personal development, welfare and well-being
 - teaching styles and strategies
 - admissions and attendance
 - staff recruitment, retention and professional development
 - care, guidance and support
 - behaviour, discipline and exclusions
 - working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians

- working with the wider community.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice-related bullying

11. The school is opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of fulfilling the legal duties referred to in paragraphs 1–4:
 - prejudices around disability and special educational needs
 - prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example antisemitism and Islamophobia, and those that are directed against Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
 - prejudices reflecting sexism and homophobia.
12. There is guidance in the staff handbook on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with.
13. We take seriously our obligation to report regularly to the local authority about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how they are dealt with.

Roles and responsibilities

14. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plan are implemented.
15. A member of the governing body has a watching brief regarding the implementation of this policy.
16. The headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.
17. A senior member of staff has day-to-day responsibility for co-ordinating implementation of the policy.
18. All staff are expected to:
 - promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
 - deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
 - plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the principles in paragraph 5 above
 - support pupils in their class for whom English is an additional language
 - keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

Information and resources

19. We ensure that the content of this policy is known to all staff and governors and, as appropriate, to all pupils and their parents and carers.

20. All staff and governors have access to a selection of resources which discuss and explain concepts of equality, diversity and community cohesion in appropriate detail.

Religious observance

21. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

Staff development and training

22. We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Breaches of the policy

23. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the headteacher and governing body.

Monitoring and evaluation

24. We collect, study and use quantitative and qualitative data relating to the implementation of this policy, and make adjustments as appropriate.
25. In particular we collect, analyse and use data in relation to achievement, broken down as appropriate according to disabilities and special educational needs; ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, national origin and national status; and gender.

Date approved by the Governing Body:

Source: This model policy was developed in Derbyshire, drawing for some its phrasing from documents developed by other local authorities and by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Background and acknowledgements: the Derbyshire model

1. As mentioned in the introductory note on page 1, this model statement is adapted from one originally produced in Derbyshire.
2. In its overall framework the Derbyshire policy on equalities in education is based on the race equality policy that it developed in response to the Race Relations Act 2000, and that was included in *Here, There and Everywhere: belonging, identity and equality in schools* published by Trentham Books in 2004.
3. The list of principles at paragraph 5 is adapted from material in *Equality Impact Assessments: a workbook*, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in December 2007, and revised in January 2009.
4. The model statement takes into account guidance issued by other local authorities. These include Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Dudley, Durham, Hertfordshire, Newcastle and Sheffield.

Legal requirements

5. At present (autumn 2009) schools are permitted by law to do any of the following:
 - draw up three separate policy statements, relating to disability, ethnicity and gender respectively
 - draw up a single statement containing three separate sections
 - draw up a single statement containing three recurring themes or threads, as in the model Derbyshire statement.
6. If a school opts for the third of these, it must ensure that each of the three threads is explicitly mentioned throughout, as in the Derbyshire model.
7. Looking ahead, it is expected that from April 2011 onwards the principal legal requirement will be for each school to identify a set of 'equality objectives', as the phrase will probably be, bearing in mind guidance about national priorities and issues published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and guidance about local priorities issued by their local authority. They will be expected to pursue their objectives within the framework of their overall school improvement plan and their self-evaluation form (SEF). The objectives will have to cover all of the equalities strands in national legislation.

Features of the Derbyshire model

8. The Derbyshire model contains the following features.
 - The term *ethnicity* is used in preference to *race* or *racial group*, on the grounds that it better reflects the intentions and concerns of race relations legislation.
 - There are references where appropriate to religious affiliation and identity.
 - There are references where appropriate to sexual identity and to challenging homophobia.
 - The duty to promote community cohesion is integrated into the policy, particularly but not only in the third of the seven principles.
 - Disability, ethnicity, gender and sexuality are referred to in alphabetical order, not in the order in which legislation requiring equality schemes and policies was introduced.
9. The Equality Act 2010 is likely to specify eight strands in the overall equalities legislative framework. In alphabetical order these are to do with age (though in education with regard to employment functions only); disability; ethnicity and race; gender; gender reassignment and identity; maternity and pregnancy; religion, faith and belief; and sexual identity and orientation. The Derbyshire model statement suggests that in schools these eight separate strands can be collapsed for most purposes into four, as shown in the statement of principles at paragraph 5.

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