

Southwark Diocesan Board of Education



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT (POLICY STATEMENT)

The Board has an Equal Opportunities Statement of Intent for its own employees, volunteers, temporary agency staff, and those with honorary contracts of employment. Members of the Board and its Committees, together with consultants and contractors, are also expected to comply with its provisions and act within the spirit of this policy.

It is anticipated that governors, in devising their own statement regarding such matters, will have regard to the Board's policy, although it is recognised that governors, as the employers of staff in the schools, have the full responsibility of deciding their own statement. Since the Equality Act 2010 came into effect in April 2011 there has no longer been a requirement that schools should draw up and publish equality schemes or policies. It is still good practice however, for a school to make a statement about the principles according to which it reviews the impact on equalities of its policies and practices, and according to which it fulfils the specific duties to publish information and evidence, and to decide on specific and measurable objectives.

INTRODUCTION

The Board wholeheartedly supports the principle of equality of opportunity in employment. It recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the Board and its employees to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the Board to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (including LGBT) (the **protected characteristics**).

The aim of this Equal Opportunities Policy is to ensure that there is recognition of cultural diversity and differences as positive attributes of the Board, and that in turn an environment results whereby it is recognised that:

- a. People work best when they are valued;
- b. People feel most valued when they believe that their individual and group differences have been taken into account;
- c. The ability to learn from people regarded as different is the key to becoming fully empowered; and
- d. When people feel valued and empowered they are able to build relationships in which they work together independently and collaboratively.

As an employer, the Board recognises a skilled and committed staff as one of the key factors in delivering the objectives of the organisation which employs them. Our aim is therefore to encourage, support and develop the abilities of all our staff in all our workplaces; to help them to contribute as much as they can to delivering the objectives of the Board and to realise their potential. Reciprocally, members of staff and prospective employees will be expected to show that they are in sympathy with and committed to the aims of the Board.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1 The Board aims to provide equality of opportunity for all members of staff and for all applicants for employment. It aims to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decisions on recruitment, selection, training, career development and other aspects of employment are based solely on objective and job-related criteria.

2 The Board and its staff will not discriminate in recruitment, selection and career development, directly or indirectly, between members of staff or between job applicants. The Board observes good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development for all employees and potential employees:

- whatever their age
- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status (except where, in filling a number of posts, it may be appropriate, insofar as the law allows, to take account of the candidate's religious affiliation).
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

3 The Board is also committed to equality of opportunity in all other aspects of our human resource policies and practice, including terms and conditions of employment, training (including induction and orientation programmes), remuneration, work allocation, appraisal, disciplinary and dismissal procedures and exit and termination mechanisms.

4 The Board recognises and respects difference. Treating people equally (as referred to 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
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual identity.

5 The Board fosters 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,

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- 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.

6 Society as a whole should benefit. The Board intends 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, and both girls and boys
- gay people as well as straight.

AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

All members of staff, members of the main board, committees of the Board and prospective members of staff will be made aware of this policy.

It is the responsibility of every member of staff to ensure the application of this policy. The success of the policy depends on the contribution made by everyone, in their own behaviour, in discouraging discrimination by colleagues and in encouraging good practice.

All managers have a responsibility to encourage their staff to familiarise themselves with this policy, to avail themselves of the relevant training and to attempt to change any discriminatory attitudes prevailing among their staff.

Chairs of Boards and Committees and their equivalents are expected to support this policy and to take a lead in promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of developing the work of the Board.

RECRUITMENT

Our recruitment and selection procedures are designed to recruit the most suitable available person for the post. In recognising that a greater diversity of staff could benefit the work of the Board it may, in so far as the law allows, wish to set qualitative and quantitative targets and take 'positive action' measures as a means of initiating change. For example the Board may seek to draw opportunities to the attention of groups that are under-represented in the workforce or in the relevant part of the workforce.

Posts will be advertised both internally and externally as necessary. This provides opportunities for existing members of staff as part of a development and retention strategy, whilst ensuring that we have the best balance of skills, knowledge and experience available to us.

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The Board is working towards ensuring that all staff and members involved in recruitment and selection will have received prior training in the application of the principle of equality of opportunity and the implications of this policy for their behaviour.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for career development for all staff with the skills, experience, qualifications, training, attitudes and aptitudes required for specific posts.

HARASSMENT, BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE AND VICTIMISATION

Members of staff are entitled to a workplace environment free from hostility. Intimidating behaviour also prevents members of staff from working effectively and denies them job satisfaction. Harassment, including sexual and racial harassment, bullying and victimisation are all therefore unacceptable and are disciplinary offences (such behaviour may also in some cases be illegal).

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Board is committed to providing equality of opportunity, wherever practicable and making reasonable adjustments where necessary, to all members of our staff and applicants for employment whether or not they have a disability.

APPLICANT AND WORKFORCE MONITORING

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for applicant and workforce monitoring.

GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

We shall not tolerate acts which breach the Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously and fully and promptly investigated.

Grievance procedures are in place for employees to pursue complaints including allegations of unfairness in relation to selection, career development (for example, promotion) or training decisions. Where allegations of harassment, bullying and victimisation are involved however, the matter will be investigated and dealt with using procedures set out in the policy.

Action by any member of staff that is contrary to this policy renders that person liable to disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal.

Those making a complaint in good faith will be given a full, fair and sensitive hearing and may do so without fear of subsequent victimisation.

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REVIEW

The Board accepts its responsibility to:

Review the current Equal Opportunities in Employment policy statement formally every three years

Monitor how the policy is working in practice– this is the critical stage in delivering equality in the workplace

Take action, where it is needed, to address inequality or promote diversity

Consider carefully any recommendations for change made to it under this policy. If it is agreed that change is needed, the Board will provide where reasonable and practicable the resources necessary for implementing those recommendations.

STATUS OF THIS POLICY

This policy and procedure forms part of the terms and conditions of all our staff.

Revised: August 2015

To be reviewed: August 2018