

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Policy Statement

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Introduction

“Equal opportunities” is an issue for all members of the school community. The core values of our mission statement reinforce a commitment to providing a Catholic education which, by its very nature, encourages all our members to respect each other’s needs regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, culture, ability or social background so that discrimination is clearly unacceptable in the school.

We accept the requirements of “Every Child Matters” in the five outcomes.

All children have a right to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

Schools have a legal responsibility to ensure the elimination of discrimination and a responsibility to make provision for pupils with special educational needs (Code of Practice 2002) including physical disabilities.

Every child has a right to a curriculum which is balanced, broadly based and relevant to their particular needs. To make access to the whole curriculum a reality for all pupils, we must foster a climate in which equality of opportunity is supported by a policy to which the whole school subscribes and in which positive attitudes to gender equality, cultural diversity, ability and special needs of all kinds are actively promoted.

As a school, we recognise that the equal opportunities policy must be incorporated into departmental schemes of work, classroom practice and school procedures. Pupils should be encouraged and empowered to make positive choices that support the school community and positively discourage discrimination in any form.

Definitions

Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional, overt or covert, direct or indirect and may be embedded in institutional practices such as

- Direct discrimination – treating a person less favourably on grounds of race or gender than others in the same circumstances.

Indirect discrimination – applying requirements or conditions which have a discriminatory effect on certain ethnic or gender groups.

Racial Harassment

Racial harassment is a severe form of harassment with potentially damaging psychological consequences. Children subjected to racial “name calling” need support. Staff should report incidents to a pupil’s form tutor in the first instance and ensure the incident is recorded on file.

St. Edmund’s School is committed to an inclusive ethos based on respect for, and celebration of, ethnic diversity. The school strives to prepare all pupils for living in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The school will strive to promote race equality in all dimensions of the school’s life and community.

Sexual Harassment.

Sexual harassment (unwanted verbal or sexual advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminating remarks which are offensive and which cause people to feel threatened or humiliated - however disseminated) is unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action.

All incidents of alleged sexual harassment involving pupils should be reported to a pupil’s form tutor in the first instance. Those involving members of staff should be reported immediately to the Head Teacher or his Deputy.

Harassment Complaints Procedure.

1. Whenever possible, a member of staff who believes that they have been harassed should, in the first instance, raise the matter directly with the person responsible and ask that person to stop the harassing behaviour.
2. If such a course is not reasonably practical, or fails to cure the problem, the member of staff should raise the matter with the school’s (confidential) counsellor or the Head Teacher. All complaints will be dealt with promptly.
3. If the confidential counsellor or Head Teacher is unable to resolve the problem informally or decides that the matter is sufficiently serious to warrant formal investigation then they will inform both the complainant and the accused.
4. The complainant will be entitled to be accompanied to any hearings by a colleague or a representative of their trade union or professional association. The accused can also bring any witnesses that they wish to call. Complaints will be dealt with as quickly as is reasonably possible. Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout any necessary investigations and hearings. These will usually be conducted by the Head Teacher although they may nominate someone to take their place if the circumstances render this more appropriate.

5. If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of the investigation by the Head Teacher, they may appeal to an appeal body comprising at least three members of the governing body. The appeal body's decision will be final.
6. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, disciplinary action against the accused will then be considered under the terms of the school's disciplinary procedures on the basis that the harassment is regarded as gross misconduct.
7. Intimidation, victimisation and discrimination on the basis that an individual has brought a harassment claim are also regarded as gross misconduct. A counter grievance procedure cannot be started by the accused once a complaint has been received.

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