



## **WEST TYNE FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS**

### **Equal Opportunities Policy**

Our Vision.....

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much: Helen Keller

Our Mission.....

Our mission is founded on Christian beliefs and values to serve our local communities and wider community through providing the best possible education in the West Tyne Federation.

Our schools are committed to the personal development of all involved and aim to provide life- long learning.

We aim to provide extended facilities in our schools in order to support each child on their learning journey.

#### **Basic principles**

1 Every member of the school is regarded as of equal worth and importance, irrespective of his/her creed, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality and/or disability.

2 A good education for all our pupils is possible only if equal opportunities practices are an integral feature of all aspects of the life of the school.

3 Equal Opportunities practices should be evident in

- the formal curriculum (the programme of lessons);
- the informal curriculum (extra-curricular activities); and
- the 'hidden' curriculum (the ethos of the school, the quality of personal relationships etc).

4 All members of the school should be aware of our equal opportunities policies. This includes pupils, teaching staff, education support staff, governors and parents.

5 Any member of the school acting in a manner contrary to the spirit of the policy should be made aware of the unacceptable nature of his/her behaviour.

Equal opportunities issues should be seen as inter-related and as applying to all aspects of our school life. This should be kept in mind when reading the points outlined below, which cover the main areas.

## **1 Religion**

1.1 We acknowledge that members of the school come from diverse backgrounds: some have no religious faith, others are committed to a greater or lesser extent to a variety of religions. We seek to promote an ethos of tolerance based on understanding of and respect for the beliefs and practices of others.

1.2 With regard to the teaching of RE we consider that the role of the teacher is that of educator and not that of evangelist. We do not seek to make pupils religious, but to teach them about religion.

## **2 Culture, class and race**

2.1 We acknowledge that members of the school come from diverse cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds and we endeavour to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in order to help to promote a school and a society in which there is social, religious and racial harmony.

2.2 We recognise the inequalities of opportunity which exist within society for individuals and groups and are determined to take positive action to enable every individual to raise his/her self-esteem, expectations and performance so as to have wider choices in life.

2.3 We understand the need to be different without being excluded.

2.4 We are happy for pupils to wear special forms of dress where these are an essential part of their religious or cultural background - sikhs' turbans, muslim girls' headscarves etc.

2.5 We value the history, experience and contribution of our multicultural community and seek to express this in the curriculum and life of our school: all members should feel that their language or dialect is valued and that bilingualism is regarded as advantageous. We try to counter negative, patronising and stereotyped views: a prime cause of prejudice is ignorance and misunderstanding.

2.6 We will not tolerate racist behaviour in any form.

2.7 We actively seek the involvement of our pupils' parents and inform them of our commitment to developing mutual respect.

## **3 Gender**

3.1 As a school, we accept that there are gender inequalities in our society which impose limits, particularly on girls' expectations and behaviour, so we constantly examine our curriculum, procedures and materials for gender bias or inequality.

3.2 We encourage pupils to be aware of the rigid sex stereotypes presented by, for example, the media. We try to ensure that our resources include non-sexist books which value the achievements of women as well as men.

3.3 We are committed to providing a curriculum which avoids unnecessary historical gender divisions. All pupils experience subjects previously considered to be suitable for a single sex e.g. rugby, netball, cooking, woodwork etc.

3.4 We try to ensure

- that teachers allocate their time fairly between the sexes,
- that all pupils have opportunities for working with pupils of both sexes,
- that we break down traditional sex stereotypes (for example by not asking boys to move furniture while girls tidy up),
- that pupils have opportunities for examining their own pre-conceived ideas of gender-roles,
- that pupils are encouraged to pursue less conventional subjects and interests (for example, girls to read more non-fiction and boys more fiction; girls to develop mechanical interests, boys creative skills),
- that, wherever possible, classes have equal numbers of boys and girls.

3.5 We do not differentiate between the sexes in respect of our school uniform.

## **4 Sexuality**

4.1 As a school, we make no assumptions about the sexuality of any of our members.

4.2 In our curricula, sexuality is taught within the context of loving relationships. Whilst heterosexual relationships are the most common in our society, we acknowledge that a small but significant number of our pupils will develop a homosexual or bisexual orientation. Discussion of homosexuality is therefore included (albeit briefly) in the sex education programme for our third and fourth year pupils. In addition, pupils' questions are answered, as they arise, as honestly, factually and non-judgementally as possible.

4.3 Derogatory name-calling (of any sort) is unacceptable.

## **5 Special educational needs**

5.1 We welcome pupils with special needs. We undertake to assess and meet the needs of all our pupils as far as we are able. We aim to create a happy and educationally exciting environment in which all pupils can prosper.

5.2 We try to avoid stereotyped assumptions about the behaviour of boys and girls as these can often influence identification and assessment procedures.

5.3 Because pupils develop at different rates for different activities, we adopt a child-centred approach to learning which is based on each pupil's needs.

5.4 We try to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities are facilitated in participating in the school's curriculum to the fullest possible extent.

5.5 Pupils with special educational needs constitute a very diverse group: they include pupils with physical, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties, those with impaired sight or hearing. We acknowledge that especially able pupils have special needs, too.

5.6 We seek assistance from a wide range of agencies where appropriate: for example speech therapists, occupational therapists, medical practitioners, psychologists and social workers.

(See also special educational needs policy)

## **6 Recruitment and selection**

6.1 We endorse in full the policy statement of Northumberland County Council *Equal Opportunity in Employment*.

6.2 The school's staff development and recruitment and selection policies are based on good equal opportunities practice.

6.3 The governors' equal opportunities statement (which is included in all job advertisements) is as follows:

*The West Tyne Federation of Schools is working towards good equal opportunities practices: applications are welcome from all sections of the community and candidates will be considered solely on their professional suitability for the post.*

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Review Date: .....