



Birmingham Ormiston Academy
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BOA

Equal Opportunities Policy

Date of Issue: September 2016
Date of Review: September 2017

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

"Education systems have two important functions in preparing young people for their society. First, schools transmit cultures and values to the young, thereby seeking to pass on the best of what has been inherited from the past. Secondly, schools question existing values so that the young can be better prepared for a world that is changing and in which new attitudes, values and skills become essential." (David Hargreaves, Professor of Education and Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge.)

Within the context of the comprehensive ideal, we must create an environment which promotes understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice.

The promotion of equal opportunities is at the centre of good education practice. The measures that will best promote the interests of minority groups are the same as those that will raise the standard of education generally. Equal opportunities should be manifested in the practices and policies of all departments of the academy.

Within the whole academy community, we aim to promote a positive self-image and mutual respect. We recognise that, in society, the needs of specific groups can sometimes be overlooked. Equal opportunities education therefore involves a holistic attitude to life.

We live in a society, which in the process of stereotyping, leads people to conform to roles which can inhibit individuals' abilities, preferences and aspirations. Passing support for equal opportunities is not enough to challenge such stereotyping.

Equal opportunities will only be achieved by the will and effort we put into implementing our policy by regular monitoring, evaluation and review.

The promotion of equal opportunities should be central to our regular process of monitoring, evaluation and review.

Educational judgements have to be made. We could not be said to be taking our own or other cultures seriously if we unthinkingly accept all aspects of our own culture or cultures, which are different from our own. Rather we should be developing in youngsters the ability to deal

with the diversity of human ideas, achievements and experience so that they are able to work out their merits or otherwise on justifiable grounds.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES -RACE

Every member of the academy's community will be involved in combating prejudice and stereotyping.

Britain is and will remain a multi-ethnic society. Teaching will reflect this fact and attempt to break down the negative stereotypes, which different groups tend to have of each other. All pupils need to be made aware of the diversity of cultures in our society, the particular contribution different groups are making to the overall culture and their achievements in all areas.

Positive responses to cultural and linguistic diversity are important but these are not enough on their own. We will condemn all expressions of a racist attitude, either through remarks or conduct and we will ensure practices and procedures are fair to all.

Racial harassment is an extreme form of racist behaviour, which will be positively discouraged in the academy.

The issues of racism and its effects on both black and white people must be addressed. How racism can and does operate will be placed on the agendas of our meetings and we must continue to develop positive practices to counteract its effects.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES -GENDER

We are committed to eliminating sexual discrimination and to increasing the equality of opportunity between the sexes for pupils and staff. Both sexes are affected by sexism but women are most disadvantaged.

We will work to combat stereotypes and prejudice, patronising behaviour and bias against girls and women. Females should not be seen as submissive or passive, and parental roles should be shown as a shared endeavour between men and women. Furthermore, sensitive or gentle male behaviour, which does not conform to the traditional 'macho' image will be validated. All types of careers in society will also be shown in this way and women's achievement will be recognised and promoted.

Sexual harassment is an extreme form of sexist behaviour, which will be positively discouraged within the academy.

N.B. -Discrimination in education on the grounds of sex, whether direct or indirect has been unlawful since the passing of the Sex Discrimination (1975).

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES -SOCIAL CLASS

We must be aware of the relationship between teacher expectation and pupils' achievement and oppose low expectations.

We must challenge stereotyped images of children from different backgrounds and social and economic groups.

We must recognise that traditionally, children from particular social and economic groups have been disadvantaged in terms of their educational achievement.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO DISABILITY, DISADVANTAGE AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

DISABILITY

We must recognise that people with disabilities have equal rights in society and an equal contribution to make. However there are many areas in which people are denied their rights; this may be through poorly designed buildings, which deny physical access, or through ignorance or prejudice, which fails to recognise the rights of an individual.

- We must therefore aim to ensure we create easy access to the building and ease of movement within it. Sometimes the greatest problem for a disabled person is not their disability but the attitude of those around them, however well meaning.
- In dealing with disability in the academy we must break down the barriers these attitudes create and provide positive images of disability.
- We must promote opportunities for disabled people to participate fully in all aspects of the academy community.
- We must monitor whether potential pupils with physical or sensory disabilities are not encouraged to choose BOA and challenge this.

DISADVANTAGE

In the academy we must also recognise disadvantage in a variety of less obvious ways. These could be:

- physical
- sensory
- social
- emotional
- financial
- by previous educational experiences
- by learning difficulties
- by having particular talents.

This may affect:

- self concept
- access to the curriculum
- academic success
- peer group acceptance
- the ability to mature and develop
- the ability to take advantage of the opportunities which are available
- physical appearance
- the ability to do homework.

It may result in stereotyping, labelling, disruptive or anti-social behaviour. It may be a short or long-term problem which may affect pupils learning or prevent them from participating in all aspects of academy life.

The extent to which these difficulties are allowed to interfere with the pupils learning depends on the way in which we in the academy community respond in terms of resources, curriculum and the ethos we create.

- * We must recognise that people have a right to expect tolerance and understanding, whether they have a temporary difficulty or a long term problem.
- * We must recognise that any member of the academy community may need support e.g. because of bereavement, stress or problems with relationships.
- * We must minimise the features of the academy, which may cause or exacerbate difficulties and take positive action where possible.
- * We must avoid the "self-fulfilling prophecy".

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties in learning affect us all at different times. Some pupils experience persistent difficulties in particular subjects or in developing key skills such as reading, spelling and writing. Some pupils experience difficulties in academic learning of a more general kind.

- * We must monitor so that all pupils receive their entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- * We must strive to meet individual learning needs.
- * We must create a community where academic and non-academic achievements are valued equally.
- * We must avoid unfair or damaging comparisons by recognising the different capabilities and starting points of individuals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- * We must value each member of the academy community as an individual.
- * We must not define individuals in terms of labels.
- * We must look at ways in which ability/disability is presented through the curriculum and stereotypes.
- * We must ensure that ability/disability is not used as a term of abuse.
- * Issues relating to ability/disability should be investigated in positive terms.
- * We must also be aware of the ways in which institutional and textbook language can disable many people.

Individual needs can take many forms and be met in a variety of ways, we must ensure that we use the school counsellor and other appropriate agencies fully. We should always remember that a person has the right to be treated so that they retain their dignity.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PRACTICE

Dealing with the issues

As the N.U.T. argues: "the teacher in the all-white school needs to be doubly aware of the problems of stereotyping; it is here that the misleading stereotypes of other groups which children receive from their textbooks will have no contradiction in reality and may be unthinkingly accepted...those children need to have assimilated in school positive experience of the diversity of cultures to be found elsewhere in Britain."

i) the issues of racism, equality and justice provide us with important ways of understanding how society actually works and how it has arrived at where it is.

In order to achieve the aims of our policy, we will:

1. Treat all staff, pupils and visitors to the school with dignity.
2. Respond positively to ethnic diversity.
3. Make regular, detailed reviews of materials and practices in order to eliminate bias or discrimination.

4. Deal with all discriminatory incidents whether physical or verbal in accordance with the policy guidelines.
5. Encourage open discussion about living in a multi-ethnic society and this should include discussions about the cause of racism.
6. Reflect the different backgrounds of the pupils in all aspects of academy life.

The School Ethos and Community

Our school reflects the shared world of males and females and when referring to both groups we should no longer use the term 'he', but 's/he' or 'she/he'. The term 'man' should not be used to denote both men and women e.g. chairman should become chairperson.

The physical environment

Our physical environment can reflect racism by graffiti in and around the building, the absence of displays reflecting the multi-cultural society in which we live. Alternatively, the elements that together make up the ethos and climate of the academy can give a positive message, which is clearly opposed to racism. Cumulatively, positive attention can contribute significantly to the well-being, security, confidence and identity of all youngsters. Our awareness of such issues will ensure that:

1. Assemblies and other group meetings should consistently emphasise the pluralist nature of our society and underline our aims of equality and justice;
2. Displays in classrooms will have a similar emphasis;
3. Although it may only be relevant for small numbers of youngsters, academy rules and regulations should show respect for cultural practices relating, for example, to dress and diet.

The Curriculum

The curriculum, explicit and hidden, will, through whole academy policies, individual department schemes of work and pastoral programmes:

1. Create an understanding in different environments, societies, systems and cultures across the world.
2. Study the political, psychological, social and economic reasons for racism, equality and justice and consider their present day effects in this country and the world.
3. Encourage pupils to recognise that each society has its own values and traditions, which will be considered in the context of that society.
4. Study scientific achievements outside the western world.
5. Develop the concepts and skills, which will allow all pupils to participate actively in society.
6. Explore and share the ideas, opinions and interests, which derive from a broad range of cultural experience.

Classroom Management

As part of the regular process of evaluation and review, we should critically review our teaching styles and materials.

We must be aware of the tendency of boys to dominate classroom space, discussion and the teacher's time and take account of these tendencies when organising our classroom work. We should attempt to counteract the findings of classroom research at a National level, which shows that it is:

normal for the teacher to ignore the girls for long periods of time, but not the boys,
normal for boys to call out, move from their seats, push each other,
normal for girls to be addressed collectively, boys by their individual names,
normal for boys to dominate classroom talk,
normal for boys to talk 'rough' girls to talk 'soft'.

Formal access to areas of the curriculum is not enough. We must develop departmental policies, which bridge the gap between good policy and good practice.

When grouping pupils across classes, we should also be aware of research, which shows that streaming widens the gap between higher and lower achievers, with a detrimental effect on lower ability groups. On the other hand, mixed ability teaching should not be seen as a panacea as observational studies show that teachers tend to teach to the middle, which produces greater overall equality as the middle and lower ability groups do better. The higher ability groups tend to miss out, so lowering the overall standards of attainment.

Assessment and Recording Achievement

Through our Achievement and Tracking System, we must ensure that we acknowledge and give credit for the full range of personal achievement. We must give status to any achievement, which a child wishes to bring to his or her Progress File. For example, equal value must be given to activities traditionally undertaken by girls.

We must ensure that the same criteria, when used in reports and profiles, applies to both girls' and boys' assessment.

We must ensure that behaviour is not determined by female and male stereotypes. Similarly, we must ensure that we do not discriminate when using words to describe the strengths and weaknesses of girls and boys.

We must be careful to encourage both sexes in subject areas, which have tended traditionally to be dominated by the opposite sex.