

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

The provision of equal opportunities is one of Finham Park School's stated aims and an essential and intrinsic part of our school ethos. We strive to create a community in which individuals and cultures are valued equally and in which students can develop to the maximum of their personal potential.

In order to prepare students to play their full part in adult life, we wish to provide a curriculum, which challenges stereotypes and aim to organise our community in ways which positively assert peoples rights to equality of opportunity.

Implementation Strategy

Establishing and 'Equal Opportunities Ethos'

'When children are born their life chances vary enormously. Thereafter their life chances are influenced very significantly by their gender, race, a disability or a learning difficulty as a result of the attitudes and conduct of individuals, institutions and of society'.

[City of Coventry Education Committee Equal Opportunities Policy – Executive Summary]

1. The School's aim of recognising and seeking to address the individual needs of all students cannot be achieved without an awareness of equal opportunity issues.

See document on 'Role of the tutor and tutorial role of all teachers.

2. We need to raise the awareness of all members of the community to issues of equal opportunity and inequality. A framework must be developed for eliminating racism, sexism and unfair discrimination or disadvantage arising from discrimination, special educational need, sexual orientation or any other similar reason.

3. An on-going programme of promoting, planning, implementing and monitoring equality of opportunity must be organised.

Statement of Responsibility

1. All members of the school community, students, non teaching and teaching staff, parents and governors must be involved in coming to a shared understanding of 'equal opportunities'.

2. All in our community must recognise the School's definition of community:

'Finham Park School is a community within a culturally pluralist society'

Community has been defined as follows: -

- (a) People together in friendship, recognising common interests and appreciating diversity.
- (b) Caring for and sharing with others.
- (c) Developing all skills for individual satisfaction and the benefit of others
- (d) The practice of loyalty, consideration and respect, one for the other.

1. All staff are responsible for preparing students for citizenship of our pluralist society – an important aspect of delivering National Curriculum Citizenship.

2. Students must be encouraged by all staff to have a clear understanding of both their rights and responsibilities within the school community.

See 'Rights and Responsibilities document.

3. All staff are responsible for transmitting school policy. There must be no ambiguity in the way the school reacts to prejudice and it is essential no-one turns a blind eye to it. Teachers have a responsibility to recognise and deal with any incidents they encounter in our outside the classroom.

See 'Rights and Responsibilities document.

4. Staff and governors should develop implementation strategies specific to their areas of responsibility.

The Curriculum

We must recognise that the curriculum, both explicit and implicit is a vehicle for both perpetuating and opposing prejudice; we must strive to minimise the former and maximise the latter.

We welcome the National Curriculum requirement on all curriculum areas to deliver equal opportunity as a cross-curricular dimension.

Curriculum teams should look at their content and delivery in order to provide access to equality of opportunity to challenge stereotypes and oppose prejudice.

The following list of suggestions for action is not prescriptive, nor is it presented in any order of priority.

(a) Ensure different courses or facilities are not offered to boys and girls unless there is a perceived need to redress an imbalance.

(b) Monitor the attention given by staff to girls and boys in lessons and develop strategies to deal with inequalities in this area.

(c) Exploit opportunities the content of their subject provides to challenge harmful stereotypes and to give an understanding of how they developed.

(d) Aim to present the multi-cultural and gender aspects of topics in a positive way.

(e) Seek out good practice in other schools and encourage our own positive initiatives.

(f) Visiting Speakers

(i) When inviting in visitors, be aware of role models and try to challenge stereotypes.

(ii) Brief visiting speakers about the implications of our equal opportunities policy.

(g) Language

(i) Ensure that the language used within the school facilitates equal access to learning by all members of the schools' community by

- Using language that can be easily understood by all members of the audience concerned.

- Using language in ways that does not marginalise or denigrate members of particular groups.

- Demonstrating that language skills are equally important whatever the language in use at the time.

(ii) Ensure that the School provides facilities so that language does not become a barrier to the provision of equal opportunities for any student

(iii) Be aware the language they use and the tasks they give can reinforce stereotypes.

(h) Resources

Departments and teams should develop checklists for assessing current stock and choosing new additions. These questions might form a basis for this:

(i) Does the way in which material is presented in your resources counteract damaging stereotypes and work to eliminate feelings of superiority or inferiority based on race, gender, disability, class or age?

(ii) Do your resources employ a variety of examples drawn from the full range of race and culture, age, class, level of physical and intellectual ability and from both sexes?

(iii) Are the customs, life-styles and traditions of all people presented in a way which helps to explain their value and meaning?

(iv) Are multicultural and gender aspects of topics presented positively?

(v) Do both positive and (where necessary) negative images refer to people from all cultural backgrounds and both sexes?

(vi) Do texts refer to famous people? If so, are there representatives from a variety of cultures from both genders?

(vii) Is the text presented in such a way that it is appropriate for the ability of all students – or are provisions clearly established to give help where necessary?

Monitoring and Evaluating of Policy

Staffing

Anyone with a responsibility for staffing must consider how the School's equal opportunity policy is implemented with regard to staffing:

- a. Does the school support
- b. the personal welfare, confidence and esteem of all staff?
- c. The career and professional development of all staff?
- d. Is serious consideration given to the provision of appropriate role models for all students?
- e. Does the implementation of professional review reflect a commitment to equality of opportunity?
- see Coventry Scheme for Professional Review
- f. Is the implementation of equal opportunities addressed when new appointments are made?

Administration working practices and community relations

We need to ensure:

(a) That the School's policy of not dividing students by gender for administrative purposes applies to all means of listing in school.

(b) That all written communications to parents and the community are in keeping with our equal opportunity policy.

(c) That the equal opportunity policy is reflected in our approaches to

- Assemblies
- Displays
- Presentation to students, parents and the community

Data Analysis

We should develop an ongoing system of collecting data. Only by collecting evidence can we effectively analyse the difference between how boys and girls and different ethnic groups experience Finham.

(a) Objective Statistics

- Key Stage 2 assessments
- Report grades
- Credits
- Students needing support from the Supportive Studies Department
- Year 9 options
- Examination results
- Work experience placements
- Attendance and punctuality records
- Disciplinary sanctions
- Staying on rates
- Destination after leaving school

(b) Other Areas of Monitoring

- Attention given to students in class
- Attitudes and expectations of students and teachers
- Classroom management – see cross curricular PSE document

Appendix to Equal Opportunities Policy

Guidelines for Action

The aim of this document is to provide practical guidelines in dealing with behaviour, which breaches the School's Equal Opportunities Policy or 'Rights and Responsibilities' document. It is vital, however, that our approach to equal opportunities is also proactive and not just reactive. The Equal Opportunities Policy includes suggestions for how to tackle equal opportunities through the curriculum. We do need to take positive action to develop the sort of community we want not just react to incidents as they occur.

1. Be aware of your own prejudices – if we are honest, we all have them – and do your utmost to prevent them from being reflected in your practice and your relationships with others in the Finham Park Community.
2. Be aware of body language of students, which can convey discrimination, as explicitly as the spoken word.
3. In deciding whether an incident or comment is in breach of our equal opportunities policy, trust your professional judgement and act. Never turn a blind eye to prejudice; this gives the impression that you are colluding with it.
4. Respond to examples of prejudice even if the perpetrator does not realise (s)he might cause offence. This may involve having the courage to respond to the comments or action of a colleague.
5. If the perpetrator is playing to an audience, or the whole class has observed the incident, you need to make sure they all see you react to and deal with discrimination. If the discrimination has been less overt, it might be more appropriate to take the student on one side for a quiet word. If you feel you need time to think about how to deal with the incident, don't forget the ploy 'come and see me after school/at break'.
6. Be explicit about the value of our community 'your behaviour is unacceptable because...'.
7. Refer to the rights and responsibilities document, a copy of which should be prominently displayed in all rooms.
8. In dealing with incidents, be aware that both sides need to be listened to and both sides have needs.
9. Build on the good relationships you have with students to help them identify their own prejudices.
10. Positively reinforce and compliment behaviour and attitudes, which demonstrate a commitment to our Equal Opportunities Policy.
11. Discuss incidents with Tutors or Year Heads. Always keep pastoral staff informed even if you are confident that you have handled the incident. If in doubt – REFER.

12. Discuss issues with a member of the Equal Opportunities Group. Even if you don't need help it is useful for equal opportunities monitoring.

Finham Park's Race Relations Policy is in the Policy Guide . Please refer to it for advice on implementing the policy, dealing with racial incidents, referring and monitoring.

See section 7.5 for "Rights and Responsibilities in the Finham Park Community"
