



Equalities Policy 2021-2024

Approved by:	Directors
Last reviewed on:	October 2021
Next review due by:	October 2024
Policy Owner	Bernadette Grimley

Rationale

The Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academy Trust has a distinctive Catholic ethos, which values each individual as a unique child of God. All students and staff who enter our schools have an equal value and therefore an entitlement to full equality of opportunity. The schools continue to strive to eliminate any gaps in achievement by analysing outcomes for groups as evidence of equality in opportunity.

The Trust recognises the need to eliminate any form of discrimination, breaking down any associated barriers. The schools will promote and celebrate “Equality for All” regardless of age, disability, race, ethnic or national origins, religious or political beliefs and affiliations, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and family responsibilities (Young Carers) thus embracing all strands of equality. The Trust and Schools understand their legal and moral responsibilities and embrace and celebrate their rich diversity at every opportunity, whilst equally attentive to their tradition as Catholic Schools and their mission to uphold the teachings of the Church.

This Single Equality Scheme encompasses equality in all forms including, Disability, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Faith/Belief and Re-assignment of Gender. Whilst being consistent with previous schemes and policies, it represents a co-ordinated approach to Equality and Diversity and a commitment to an ongoing process of positive development. It is the Trust’s vision to provide an environment in which discrimination in all its forms is deemed to be unacceptable and to treat everyone equally, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, belief, age, mental or physical health or sexual orientation. Tackling discrimination and promoting healthy relationships with people is wholly consistent with the Trust’s pursuit of excellence and its deeply embedded spirituality.

Purpose of the policy

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against students or treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity.

Age, marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” but are not part of the school provisions related to students.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools and the Trust to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** or “general duty” requires all public organisations, including schools to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
- Foster good relations between different groups.

This policy describes how the Trust is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the Trust is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

Development of the policy

This policy takes account of the DfE guidance on the Equality Act 2010, **The Equality Act 2010 and schools - Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities** (May 2014) and also the most recent Ofsted inspection framework.

This places a strong focus on improving the learning and progress of different groups and on closing gaps in standards.

We note that OFSTED has a statutory duty to report on the outcomes, progress and provision for students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

In addition, in compiling this policy in January 2021 the Trust is aware of the social landscape with regards to the public concern over the death of George Floyd and the rise of the BLM Movement. As a Catholic Academy Trust the dignity and inclusion of our students from diverse ethnicities represent an essential part of our mission as a Catholic Community. (Supported by CARJ The Catholic Association for Racial Justice)

Links to other policies and documentation

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the approach outlined in this policy underpins all decision making in relation to our Trust plans, policy reviews and self-evaluation.

There are also references to equalities in school behaviour, attendance, admissions, SEN and anti-bullying policies in our schools.

The Equality Act also applies to schools in their role as employers, and the ways we comply with this are found in all our related HR policies.

Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

As a Trust we take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our students and the way we provide access for students to facilities, services, trips and visits. We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled students – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled students in our schools and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.

The Trust ensure that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities. We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. The Trust provides CPD on issues pertaining to this policy regularly.

We take seriously the need to consider equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day-to-day life of Trust Schools.

We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum in each school and by creating an environment which champions respect for all, working together and the need for all to

embrace diversity. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against students by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

As a Trust we closely monitor data on exclusions and absence from school for evidence of over-representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns. Schools within the Trust compile their behaviour policy with due regard to Equalities and Diversity issues.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice-based bullying.

Schools within the Trust challenge all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs.
- prejudices around race, religion or belief, for example anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum.
- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation, including homophobic and transphobic attitudes.

All staff will receive guidance on how incidents of bullying and prejudice should be reported, recorded and dealt with. We treat all bullying incidents equally seriously. A record of prejudice related incidents is kept, and a report is provided to governors and directors about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our schools and how we dealt with them. This data is reported to the Trust and at LAC meetings.

Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups

As a Trust we collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of students and use this data to support school improvement. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making poor progress in reading across the Trust.

All data is analysed in relation to the standards reached by different groups at the end of each data collection: White British, FSM and non-FSM, Ethnic Minorities (in particular Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean), EAL, all SEN and sub-categories, Looked after Children and other groups specific to each year cohort.

We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups.

We are aware that the legislation relates mainly to current but also to future students – our Trust Schools will, for example, be sufficiently prepared if a Visually Impaired, Physically disabled, or student of an ethnic minority group not already within our school population joins our school community.

Trust Schools use a range of teaching strategies that ensure we meet the needs of all students. We provide support to students at risk of underachieving. We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality.

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between, for example:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds - girls and boys

We ensure equality of access for all students to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.

As a Trust the buildings in all schools are subject to an annual Health and Safety Review, During the course of this review accessibility and compliance for issues pertaining to disability are Audited resulting in an Action Plan which is monitored by the Trust.

Positive Action

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of students with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the school's Equality Objectives.

What we are doing to foster good relations

As a Trust we prepare our students for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our students. We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through RE, PSHE, RSE and across the curriculum. We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school, population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping. We promote a whole school ethos that challenges prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.

Other ways we address equality issues.

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- Offer CPD for Head Teachers.
- Monitoring of any prejudiced related bullying.
- Consultation with parents surrounding RSE.
- Review of the Curriculum in line with the OFSTED Framework.

Publishing Equality Objectives

Each school within the Trust is expected to state their Equalities Objectives annually so that any issues of discrimination, any issues of underperformance from a particular contextual group or any issue where accessibility is compromised can then be set into an Action Plan to steer interventions in the coming year.

Roles and Responsibilities

We expect all members of the Trust and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

Directors

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. Directors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g., data) and qualitative evidence (e.g., surveys)

Governors

Every Local Academy Committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment.

Head Teachers and Leadership teams

The Head Teachers are responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and receive appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

Teaching and Support Staff

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classrooms and challenge prejudice and discrimination.
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur.
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender, and disability.
- maintain the highest expectations of success for all students.
- support different groups of students in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult.
- keep up to date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

As a Trust we will provide training and guidance on Equalities for all Head Teachers and to the schools as requested.

Visitors

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy.

Equal Opportunities for staff

We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.

All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law. We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students, and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice. All schools are required to keep up with annual Equalities Training.

Monitoring and Reviewing the policy

We review the information about equalities in the policy every three years.

Disseminating the policy

This Equality Policy can be found on the Trust Website and on the website of all schools.