



Barcombe Hamsey Plumpton Iford & Kingston

The Skylark Federation

Equality Policy

2023

Barcombe CE Primary

Hamsey Primary

Iford and Kingston CE Primary

Plumpton Primary

Why we have developed this Equality Policy?

This Equality Policy for The Skylark Federation brings together all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had for race, gender and disability. It includes all the protected characteristics covered under the Equality Act 2010, as well as other aspects which have the potential to discriminate against or devalue any individuals within our community. We are fully committed to the development of cohesive communities both within our schools' physical boundaries and within our local, national and global environments. Our schools embrace the aim of working together with others to improve children's educational and wellbeing outcomes, and notes the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Linked policies and documents: SEN Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Behaviour Policy; Teaching and Learning documentation; Equality Objectives; Accessibility Plan; Reporting Incidents Procedures; School Council/Pupil Governors Minutes.

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of our whole Skylark community-pupils, staff, parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies.

The purpose of this Equality Policy is to set out how our practice and policies have due regard to the need to:

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

It explains how we aim to listen to and involve pupils, staff, parents/carers, and the community in achieving better outcomes for our children and young people.

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation.

The area:

Chailey, Barcombe, Hamsey, and Lewes

- Income Deprivation=22.5%
- Employment Deprivation=22.5%
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation=13.5%
- Health Deprivation and Disability=13.5%
- Crime=9.3%
- Barriers to Housing and Services=9.3%
- Living Environment Deprivation=9.3%

Statistics from *iLive Here UK*

Overall aims of our Equality Policy

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within our schools and within our wider communities.
- To promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, sexual orientation, cultures, faiths, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.

To ensure that equality and inclusive practice are embedded across all aspects of school life, the Equality Policy refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes recognition of a range of educational, wellbeing and material outcomes (<https://www.unicef.org/crc/>).

Issues relating to adults within the school community can be embraced under these themes and reflected in our Equality Objectives.

Our approach

We seek to embed equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all members of our school community, within all aspects of school life.

We actively seek out opportunities to embrace the following key concepts:

- Shared humanity. Identifying commonality and shared values, aspirations and needs underpins our approach to equality. We value our fundamental similarities and universality.
- Valuing difference and diversity. We appreciate the richness within our differences and look for ways of celebrating and understanding them better.
- Interdependence, interaction and influence. We recognise that, as they evolve, distinct cultures, beliefs and lifestyles will impact on and inform each other.
- Social cohesion within our schools and within our local communities.
- Excellence. We aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our communities, the UK and the wider world. Excellence is to be found everywhere. Personal and cultural identity. We will provide opportunities to explore and value the complexity of our personal and cultural identities.
- Fairness and social justice. We will develop our understanding of the inequality that exists in society and explore ways of individually and collectively promoting a more equitable society.

Our schools value difference and diversity, and not allowing any aspect of the above to become a barrier to learning. We use role models from other cultures to embody this and demonstrate that excellence can be found everywhere.

Our vision statement about Equality

The Skylark Federation schools seek to foster warm, welcoming and respectful environments, which allow us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully, and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

We recognise that there are similarities and differences between individuals and groups but will strive to ensure that our differences do not become barriers to participation, access and learning, and to create inclusive processes and practices, where the varying needs of individuals and groups are identified and met. Therefore, we cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

We will build on similarities and seek enrichment from our differences and, so, promote understanding and learning between and towards others to create cohesive communities.

Our duties

We recognise and accept our equality duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010; we want better outcomes for all. We have due regard to the need to ensure that persons with a protected characteristic are not disproportionately negatively impacted as a result of our decision or policy making. We positively foster good relations between different groups of pupils and the wider school community.

We will consider whether to provide auxiliary aids that are directly related to disabled children's educational needs as a reasonable adjustment, particularly where the child is not provided for under an EHC Plan, or where the plan does not provide the auxiliary aid or service.

We are also guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (<https://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Rights-Respecting-Schools-Award/Children-rights/>).

We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our visions, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of the life of our schools, including the provision of extended services.

These opportunities are likely to include all or some of the following, dependent on our current priorities:

- The engagement, participation and involvement of a broad and diverse range of children, young people, their parents and partner agencies
- Preparation for entry to school
- School policies
- Break times and lunchtimes
- The provision of school meals
- Interaction with peers
- Opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- Exam arrangements
- Behaviour management approach and sanctions
- Exclusion procedures
- School clubs, activities and school trips
- The schools' arrangements for working with other agencies
- Preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- Learning and teaching, and the planned curriculum
- Classroom organisation
- Timetabling
- Grouping of pupils
- Homework
- Access to school facilities
- Activities to enrich the curriculum (a visitor to the school, for example)
- School sports
- Employees' and staff welfare

The roles and responsibilities within our school community

Our Executive Head Teacher and our Heads of School will:

- Ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students, visitors and contractors are engaged in the development of, and informed about, the Equality Policy
- Oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- Ensure staff have access to training which helps to implement the policy
- Develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the schools' actions are in line with the best advice available

- Monitor the policy and report to the Governing Body at least annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publish this information
- Ensure that the Senior Leadership Team is kept up to date with any development affecting the policy or actions arising from it.

Our Governing Body will:

- Designate a governor with specific responsibility for the Equality Policy
- Ensure that the objectives arising from the policy are part of the Federation's Development Plan
- Support the Executive Head Teacher in implementing any actions necessary
- Engage with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- Evaluate and review the policy annually and the objectives every four years.

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- Have responsibility for supporting other staff in implementing this policy
- Provide a lead in the dissemination of information relating to the policy
- With the Executive Head Teacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
- Assist in implementing reviews of this policy.

Our pupils will:

- Be involved in the development of the policy and understand how it related to them, appropriate to age and ability
- Be expected to act in accordance with the policy
- Be encouraged to actively support the policy.

Our parents/carers will:

- Be given accessible opportunities to become involved in the development of the policy
- Have access to the policy through a range of different media appropriate to their requirements
- Be encouraged actively to support the policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the policy
- Be informed of any incident related to this policy which could directly affect their child.

Our staff will:

- Be involved in the development of the policy
- Be fully aware of the Equality Policy and how it relates to them
- Understand that this is a whole school issue and support the Equality Policy
- Make known any queries or training requirements.

Relevant voluntary or community groups and partner agencies will:

- Be involved in the development of the policy
- Be encouraged to support the policy
- Be encouraged to attend any relevant meetings and activities related to the policy.

How we developed our Equality Policy-Participation and Involvement

The development of this policy has involved our schools' communities. We have involved and listened to what they have to say, including people from broad and diverse backgrounds and of different abilities, taking account of all the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010.

- Our pupils-We gathered pupils' views through School Council/Pupil Governor meetings and, also, through our PSHE curriculum.
- Our staff-We gathered the views of our staff through staff meetings.
- Our governors-We gathered governors' views through discussion and items at governing body meetings.
- Our parents/carers-We listen to our parents' views through surveys/parent questionnaires.
- Minority, marginalised and potentially vulnerable groups-As above. Pupils, staff, and parents offered support as required/appropriate.
- Ongoing-Through our ongoing monitoring systems, we will keep dialogue open.

How we developed our Equality Policy-Using information

We have used data and other information about our schools as common-sense measures to determine the effects of a policy, practice or project on different groups. We need to analyse whether what we are planning potentially has an impact on one or more particular group (either positively or negatively). We need to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups, and that the positive duties are promoted. They help to ensure that we meet the diverse needs of our pupils and staff, and that diversity, equality and inclusion run through all areas of school life. We know our schools well because we regularly collect information about ourselves in a variety of ways and other people help us to do this. Our SIMS data enables us to track attendance of different groups of children, for example. RAISE online data helps us to track the progress of our pupils.

Ofsted inspectors visit us and report on equality issues during our inspections. We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying including those relating to racism, homophobia, faith, disability and gender.

We also value more qualitative information which may be given to us through pupil/learner voice mechanisms, less formally or even anonymously.

We use questionnaires/surveys as a way of collecting parent voice. These tell us that parents and pupils are happy and feel their child is kept safe in school. Parents have the opportunity to complete these anonymously.

The Local Authority provides us with a range of services which support the equality agenda and helps to identify our strengths and those requiring action. Our schools have links with ESBAS, for example. Our links with health partners are strong, as are our relationships with Sussex Police.

We have established good links with our local and wider communities. We welcome them into our schools. From them, we learn about equality issues outside school and can establish mechanisms for addressing them within school.

By listening to those within our communities and to our partners, we are able to identify new areas of work, improve existing approaches, and focus our energy when it is required.

Commissioned services (buying in services)

Increasingly, we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. We work closely with the LA on procurement (buying in services) to ensure that equality issues are given full regard. When buying goods and services from external supplier, we ask the following questions to help ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

- Could the proposed procurement affect the duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity amongst the school community?
- If so, is there a need to include some equality requirement within the contract and what would this be?

We ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our policy, and we require similar compliance by any sub-contractors.

Our staff

We comply fully with legislation which protects our staff from discrimination based on protected characteristics. With regard to disability, we make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a disabled person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a person who is not disabled.

This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices (such as dress codes), and disciplinary procedures. We make efforts to ensure that the diversity of our workforce reflects that of our local community and wider society. In accordance with the Equality Act, we do not enquire about the health of an applicant until a job offer has been made (unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work-for example, ensuring that applicants for a PE teaching post have the physical capability to carry out the duties) or require job applicants to complete a generic 'all encompassing' health questionnaire as part of the application procedure.

We will ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and take seriously, and act on, incidents of harassment and discrimination, recognising that our staff may be either victims or perpetrators.

There are some specific exceptions to the religion or belief provisions of the Equality Act for employment by schools designated as having religious character. For further guidance <https://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/the-equality-act-2010>

We interpret our duties positively; we take the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and work hard to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

Our staff have undertaken training to help them understand their equality duties and/or the differing needs of protected groups within our school communities. We have mechanisms in place to identify areas for development.

Responding to hate or prejudice-based incidents and bullying

We recognise that hate incidents or prejudice-based bullying behaviour is driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes or misinformation. These are then directed against an individual or group,

based on difference (real or perceived), and linked to, for example, racism, homophobia, negative views or disabled people or sexism. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

We recognise that we as individuals and society often struggle with difference of any kind (perceived or actual), which can result in seizing upon the most visible sign of difference (for example, skin colour or disability).

Through our ethos and curriculum, we want our pupils to understand better the diversity that exists in society. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore the subtleties and complexities in order to prevent and respond to incidents and situations. We will address the experience, understanding and needs of the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders, and the wider school community through our actions and responses.

We will record all hate incidents and prejudice-based bullying. We will use this information to identify trends and patterns so that we have approaches in place to provide appropriate responses in terms of support for victims and their families, sanctions and support for perpetrator and their families, and education for our children, young people and communities.

Our school process for responding to all hate incidents and prejudice-based bullying follows our Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, and Staff Code of Conduct. The staff non-negotiables also set out expectations clearly.

We have a bullying incident record. We investigate all allegations and keep a record of these, reporting to governors throughout the year.

Any hate or prejudice incidents are reported to the LA.

Information is shared with parents at the earliest opportunity, and they have access to records made of the incident. We always seek to actively involve parents in the resolution.

Implementation, monitoring and review

This policy will be actively promoted and disseminated through our websites and staff meetings.

Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of the SLT and our governors who have agreed and published this policy which sets out our priorities and supports those with measurable objectives. Our Equality Objectives are available on our school websites.

We will report annually on the policy, analysing whether it, and related objectives, have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and, in particular, educational outcomes for all within our school communities with reference to particular groups.