

# The St Michael Steiner School

## Equality & Diversity Policy

### Introduction

We recognise and value the fact that our school is part of a multicultural society and believe that the atmosphere of respect for others, which our ethos seeks to foster, creates a culture in which discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation are totally unacceptable.

We appreciate diversity in the school community and value it as an asset to the children's education.

We value all of our employees and treat them fairly and with respect regardless of their role.

Our selection, recruitment, training and development processes ensure that candidates are selected for their aptitude and ability.

We give all employees equal opportunities in the workplace regardless of their age, religion or belief, disability, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation or transgender status.

We strive to deal quickly, thoroughly and confidentially with any discriminatory attitudes we encounter in the school and its community.

This policy applies to current and prospective members of the school community: children/students, staff and parents.

### Legislation

Our policies comply with the Equality Act (2010) and The Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)

### The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into effect in October 2010. Government guidance on how it affects education is available [here](#).

The Equality Act 2010 details a list of 'protected characteristics'; these are the grounds upon which it is unlawful to discriminate against people.

They are:

- age
- marriage and civil partnership
- sex
- disability
- race
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- religion or belief (or lack thereof)
- pregnancy and maternity.

### The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) 2011

Since 2011, public sector organisations including schools are required to:

- Have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other behaviour that is unlawful.

- Have ‘due regard’ to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with a protected characteristic, as well as those without.
- Have ‘due regard’ to the need to foster good relations in the school, specifically regarding people with protected characteristics.

Further guidance on what is expected is available [here](#)

## The main types of discrimination

The main types of discrimination are:

- direct discrimination (including perceptive and associative discrimination)
- indirect discrimination
- victimisation
- harassment.

### Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (perceptive discrimination), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (associative discrimination).

- Perceptive discrimination is direct discrimination against an individual because others *think* they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.
- Associative discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because they *associate with* another person who possesses any one or more of the protected characteristics.

### Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can happen when there’s a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in the school that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

### Victimisation

Most of us will understand the word victimisation to mean singling someone out for exploitation or unfair treatment. For the purposes of this course, in this context, it is when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

### Harassment

The law defines harassment as:

“unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.”

## The Legislation and the School's Ethos

This above legislation lists protected characteristics which we must consider. However, individuals may be discriminated against in other ways, and we strive to be aware of discrimination wherever and to whomever it occurs, and to try to provide an inclusive environment for everyone.

The PSED (2011) legislation says that the school must have 'due regard' for the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

This means that, in making decisions and in day-to-day activities we must consciously consider the need for these things. When we are considering them, we must also take into account the impact any decisions we make will have on the whole school community, and on the school's particular ethos, i.e. we must consider people with protected characteristics, but also everyone else. Any adaptations made to the curriculum to advance the opportunities of people with protected characteristics should not hold anyone else back.

For example, the school's ethos puts significant importance on physical and practical education. It would not be appropriate to deny all pupils the opportunity to go climbing because one student uses a wheelchair and would not be able to participate. Teachers in this scenario would be expected to find an alternative activity for the student who uses a wheelchair. However, we would also expect that planned activities for the class as a whole would include a significant majority in which the wheelchair user, as part of the class, could participate.

It is also part of the school's ethos that children are encouraged to stretch themselves beyond their comfort zone. It would therefore not be appropriate to make something easier for everyone in order not to discriminate against one or two children who struggle, for example, with practical activities. While we might provide simpler tools or processes for these children, we would not give these to all of the children because it would deny them the opportunity to develop the level of skill of which they are capable.

We are also aware that providing 'special' things (tasks, support) for pupils with additional needs can also make them feel different or excluded. This should also be taken into account in planning, alongside the considerations above. Each situation will require an individual decision.

## Whistle blowing

If any member of the school community experiences or witnesses discrimination as defined by this policy, they should follow the school's Whistle-blowing policy. Alternatively, contact the designated College member for Equality & Diversity, Stella Ottewill at [stellaottewill@stmichaelsteiner.com](mailto:stellaottewill@stmichaelsteiner.com)

Next review: July 2026