

# MERE SCHOOL

## Equal Opportunities Policy

### Introduction

Mere School is committed to promoting understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice. We aim to equip children with an awareness of our diverse society and to appreciate the value of difference.

Every member of Mere School is regarded as of equal worth and importance, irrespective of his/her creed, culture, class, race, gender, sexuality and/or disability.

Every aspect of Mere School activity has an equal opportunities dimension. This may be expressed explicitly in teaching materials and display, implicitly in classroom practice, or as part of the 'hidden curriculum' of social interaction amongst and between staff and children.

Mere School's environment influences the developing attitudes of the children within it and can be a powerful vehicle for the promotion of understanding and practice of equal opportunities.

We live in a society where disability discrimination segregates and isolates people from their communities. Mere School aims through its proactive approach to inclusion to enable our children to an equality of access to their communities. Through dual placement of children in their local schools and outreach work, Mere School aims to support schools develop their ability to educate with children with disabilities. Addressing fundamental prejudices against disability in both children and adults is a core "hidden" element of our inclusion work.

### The Law and Discrimination

#### Sex Discrimination

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 applies to both males and females and makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of his or her sex.

#### Racial Discrimination

The Race Relations Act 1976 defines racial discrimination as discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

#### Disability Discrimination

Under the Disability Discrimination 1995, disabled people have a right not to be discriminated against in employment or access to goods or services. A

person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

## **Aims**

- To ensure that children and staff recognise that discrimination on the basis of colour, culture, origin, sex or ability is not acceptable.
- To provide an environment in which all children and staff feel safe enough to express and question views.
- To ensure that all staff feel valued and supported and have appropriate advice and encouragement for professional development.
- Ensure the principles and practice of equal opportunities apply to all members of the school community: students; teaching and non-teaching staff; parents; governors and visitors.
- Equal Opportunities practices should be evident in
  - a) the formal curriculum (the programme of lessons);
  - b) the informal curriculum (extra-curricular activities); and
  - c) the 'hidden' curriculum (the ethos of the school, the quality of personal relationships etc).
- To educate, develop and prepare all our children for life whatever their sex, colour, origin, culture or ability.
- Children and teachers contribute towards a happy and caring environment by showing respect for, and appreciation of, one another as individuals.
- Children are seen as individuals and each child's education and care is to be developed in direct relation to their needs and abilities. This eclectic approach is to be based upon sound knowledge and awareness of an appropriate range of teaching and learning styles, teaching interventions, behavioural methods, medical and diagnostic issues.

## **Policy into Practice**

### **a) Admission**

Mere School follows the LEA Admission Policy that does not permit sex, race, colour or disability to be used as criteria for admission.

### **b) Registration**

Children and staff names will be accurately recorded and correctly pronounced. Children will be encouraged to accept and respect names from other cultures.

### **c) Discrimination**

All forms of discrimination by any person within the school's responsibility will be treated seriously as such behaviour is unacceptable. Racist

symbols, badges and insignia on clothing and equipment are forbidden in school. Staff should be aware of possible cultural assumptions and bias within their own attitudes. In all staff appointments the best candidate will be appointed based on strict professional criteria. Parents should be aware of the school's commitment to equal opportunities.

All cases of discrimination or prejudice should be taken seriously and dealt with, as appropriate, according to existing sanction procedures. A record of incidents should be kept.

**d) Language**

The school views linguistic diversity positively. Children and staff must feel that their natural language is valued.

**e) Culture, Class and Race**

Mere School acknowledges that members of the school come from diverse cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds and we endeavour to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in order to help to promote a school and a society in which there is social, religious and racial harmony. Mere School recognises the inequalities of opportunity which exist within society for individuals and groups and are determined to take positive action to enable every individual to raise his/her self esteem, expectations and performance so as to have wider choices in life.

We understand the need to be different without being excluded.

We are happy for pupils to wear special forms of dress where these are an essential part of their religious or cultural background - sikhs' turbans, Muslim girls' headscarves etc.

We value the history, experience and contribution of our multi-cultural community and seek to express this in the curriculum and life of our school.

We try to counter negative, patronising and stereotyped views: a prime cause of prejudice is ignorance and misunderstanding.

We make use of Wiltshire's EMAS (Education Minority Advisory Service) for advice and teaching support. We will not tolerate racist behaviour in any form.

**f) Gender**

As a school, we accept that there are gender inequalities in our society which impose limits, particularly on girls' expectations and behaviour, so we constantly examine our curriculum, procedures and materials for gender bias or inequality.

We encourage pupils to be aware of the rigid sex stereotypes presented by, for example, the media.

We are committed to providing a curriculum which avoids unnecessary historical gender divisions. All pupils experience subjects previously considered to be suitable for a single sex.

We try to ensure:

1. that teachers allocate their time fairly between the sexes,
2. that all pupils have opportunities for working with pupils of both sexes,
3. that we break down traditional sex stereotypes (for example by not asking boys to move furniture while girls tidy up),
4. that pupils are encouraged to pursue less conventional subjects and interests, and
5. we do not differentiate between the sexes in respect of our school uniform.

#### **g) Religion**

We acknowledge that members of the school come from diverse backgrounds: some have no religious faith, others are committed to a greater or lesser extent to a variety of religions. We seek to promote an ethos of tolerance based on understanding of and respect for the beliefs and practices of others.

With regard to the teaching of RE we consider that the role of the teacher is that of educator and not that of evangelist. We do not seek to make pupils religious, but to teach them about religion.

#### **h) Resources**

Mere School's aim is to provide for all children according to their needs, irrespective of sex, ability or ethnic origin. Resources are to reflect cultural and racial backgrounds of children to support positive self imagery. We try to ensure that our resources include non-sexist books which value the achievements of women as well as men. Displays will similarly reflect a range of cultures and races. All materials in use in Mere School will be monitored.

#### **i) Relationships**

Relationships between staff, children and management should be such that any member of the school acting in a manner contrary to the spirit of this policy is made aware of the unacceptable nature of his/her behaviour. This should be done in a supportive manner to encourage change and reinforce the principles of this policy. When it is uncomfortable or inappropriate to address the issue between staff then management must be made aware of the incident and supervisors address the incident with

the staff or child involved through supervision. In extreme circumstances formal procedures may be taken by the Head Teacher in line with Mere School's Anti-bullying policy.

## **j) Appointments**

The Head Teacher will ensure that in recruitment procedures any advertisements, shortlisting and interview procedures are without any hint of direct or indirect discrimination. During employment it would be unlawful to discriminate in the way opportunities for promotion, transfer or training were offered. It is also unlawful to discriminate in dismissals, particularly in redundancy dismissals.

## **Awareness of policy**

Parents and pupils know that the school has an equal opportunities policy and is committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The governing body and the head teacher actively promote and implement this policy. Only if there is transparency in the dealing with staff issues will colleagues feel comfortable with the outcomes.

The Governing body in their annual report publishes information on the following arrangements regarding disabled pupils:

- arrangements at the school for the admission of pupils with disabilities,
- the steps to prevent those pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils,
- the facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities.

## **Monitoring and review**

Mere School monitors the impact of this policy and on different groups (by race, gender and disability) and the effectiveness of this policy is assessed through Mere School's self evaluation procedures.

Spring 2008

Review: Spring 2011