

Equal Opportunities Policy

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Prendergast School was founded as a girls' grammar school in 1890 so its pupil intake was determined by academic ability until 1977 when it became a comprehensive school. However, its intake has always reflected the diverse class and ethnic backgrounds of the local community which has itself shifted significantly over the period since its foundation. The present pupil intake continues to reflect this local diversity in class and ethnic origin. The teaching staff of the Grammar School was predominantly female, white and perceived as middle class by past pupils! The class and ethnic composition of the staff has also changed since 1977, although more gradually than that of the pupil intake. Archives and oral research show that ethnic minorities and men have been members of the teaching staff at least since the 1960s.

Currently the Governors fully support the Lewisham statement on staff appointments: "Applications are welcome from all people regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion. We expect all our employees to have an understanding of and commitment to our equal opportunities policies."

CONTEXT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Our equal opportunities policy should inform the whole school experience of the total community. We envisage that this should include all of the following: pupils, staff (including all professional support staff), governors, parents, parents and the local community. Our definition of the whole school experience includes the stated and hidden curriculum.

The stated curriculum relates to the following:

- The timetabled curriculum for each pupil
- All teaching materials (including display)
- The overall management structure
- Assemblies
- School functions
- Extra curricular visits
- Residential visits

The hidden curriculum relates to the sub-conscious inter-personal relationships and attitudes e.g. pupil to pupil; pupil to staff; staff to staff etc. - as well as the overall ethos of the school.

STATEMENT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Prendergast is a school where we expect everyone to respect each other. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so that they can learn in a comfortable and secure atmosphere.

DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS - SOCIAL / ECONOMIC

Prendergast School is committed to recognising and valuing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all its members and to actively developing strategies with staff, parents and pupils for enabling all pupils to take advantage of all aspects of school life - this means supporting families as well as pupils.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Prendergast is proud of the cultural diversity of its pupils and staff. Each person's cultural experience is valued and we aim to encourage the sharing and respect of different creeds and beliefs.

GENDER

As a girls' school it is important to keep an oversight of the balance of the curriculum and to highlight opportunities particularly in curriculum areas which are perceived negatively as a suitable area of study.

DIFFERENTLY ABLE

The school is a fully comprehensive one and has the widest possible range of intake commensurate with its facilities. The school seeks to encourage the important contribution that each pupil makes by promoting success and achievement solely on the grounds of merit and ability, taking into account those who are differently able as well as those with particular learning needs.

INVOLVING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

We recognise the richness that cultural and racial diversity brings to our school community. Everyone needs to feel that Equal Opportunities are central to all staff and students of the school, and be actively involved. Pupils may contribute to this, such as putting their views to School Council, organising assemblies or displays. At a deeper level, to raise awareness, pupils should be involved in discussions as to the nature and importance of Equal Opportunities. In addition to the implementation of the above, it must be made clear that any form of discrimination or displays of negative attitudes are totally unacceptable and will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter. All concerned should feel able to report any incident that worries them and should feel that their anxieties will be fully investigated. All pupils should have the confidence to make their own contribution to the life of the school.

MONITORING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In order to develop strategies to tackle instances where Equal Opportunities are seen to be challenged in both the overt and hidden curriculum the following developments have already taken place.

- The school development plan incorporates a high priority rolling programme of monitoring and evaluation backed by appropriate resources, in areas such as classroom observation; pupils' perspective; staffing; clubs / residential visits.
- Equal Opportunities to be a standing item on Governors meeting in June.
- Equal Opportunities as an agenda item at the AGM for parents by Governors.
- Departmental monitoring and evaluation of resources in relation to Equal Opportunities and incorporation of this review in annual departmental evaluation statement.
- Regular review of Equal Opportunities to incorporate on-going developments.

SCHOOL STATEMENT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This is displayed in the school:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES UPDATE

Equal Opportunities is a dimension which permeates the whole school; curriculum and 'hidden' curriculum. The messages and images that are overtly or covertly displayed are under constant challenge and revision. Much of this is done through staff in department, section or staff meetings and there is the opportunity for girls to express their views and opinions during form time and through their School Council Meetings. There are many barriers to equality and we are aiming to combat some of the conscious and unconscious mechanisms and attitudes that are prevalent in most institutions.

There is an ongoing review of:

- Curriculum and Resources
- Language policy in school
- Staffing policy
- Assemblies - recognition of festivals and girls taking on responsibilities.
- Communication to parents / pupils
- Cultural evenings
- In service training and staff development
- Code of conduct and handling of 'incidents'
- Anti-bullying policy
- Equal Opportunities Statement
- Raising achievement and awareness of all pupils

What have we done so far:

- Consulted widely amongst staff and pupils regarding an Equal Opportunities Statement.
- Ensured that pupils have the opportunity each year to take responsibility for an assembly - instigated from pupil suggestions.
- Cultural evenings organised through FOPSA (many girls, parents and staff attending).
- Had awareness raising and training from Kidscape on developing a school anti-bullying policy.

STAFF

The Governors are equal opportunity employers and are committed to ensuring that, within the framework of the law, the School is free from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, age, religious belief, political beliefs or disability.

The governors aim to ensure that all staff can achieve their potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria. The Governors have adopted the following steps as a means of achieving this aim.

- Recruitment and employment decisions will be made on the basis of fair and objective criteria. Selection procedures will be reviewed from time to time to

ensure that they are appropriate for achieving the School's objectives and for avoiding unlawful discrimination.

- The requirements of job applicants and existing members of staff who have, or have had, a disability will be reviewed to ensure that whatever possible reasonable adjustments are made to allow them to enter into, or remain in, School employment. Promotion opportunities, benefits and facilities of employment will not be unreasonably limited and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that disabled staff can participate fully.
- Person and job specifications shall be limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Interviews will be conducted on an objective basis and personal or home commitments will not form part of employment decisions, except where necessary.
- The ethnic and gender composition of staff will be monitored at all levels. Information will be taken from existing records, with additional data sought when necessary.
- Appropriate training will be provided, where necessary, to enable staff to implement and uphold this commitment to equality of opportunity. Such training could range from discussions with Senior Managers to externally provided courses. Training needs will be assessed as part of the normal annual personal development review process.
- Consideration will be given to developing action programmes to promote equality of opportunity.
- All staff have a right to equality of opportunity. All staff have a duty to implement this policy.
- Breach of the equal opportunity policy is a potentially serious disciplinary matter. Similarly, unsubstantiated accusations of discrimination for malicious purposes could be a serious disciplinary offence. Anyone who believes that they may have been disadvantaged on discriminatory grounds is entitled to raise the matter through the LA/School Grievance procedure.

January 1994

June 1995

March 1998

July 1999

July 2007