Policy for Equal Opportunities

Meopham Community Academy is committed to the general principle of equal opportunities for all pupils irrespective of race, religion, gender, language, disability or social background, and to the support of initiatives designed to further this principle.

PART 1:

At Meopham Community Academy, the staff and governors aim to ensure that every pupil and staff member is given an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential. In addition, each individual is entitled to learn, teach or work in a supportive environment and to benefit from the diversity of our school community.

In order to meet these aims, we are committed to:

- Equal access to education for everyone
- Being responsive to needs
- Educating and informing children, staff and parents about equal opportunities
- Avoiding prejudice
- Promoting mutual respect
- Working to an agreed code of conduct

Objectives:

Our objectives are detailed in the document 'Equality Information and Objectives'.

PART 2:

Our Legal Duties:

Unlawful discrimination occurs when one person receives less favourable treatment because of their race, religion, gender, language, disability or family background. The law is extensive and complex in these areas, however legislation relating to equality and discrimination is laid out in the Equality Act 2010. The legislation covers employment (work), the provision of services and public functions, and education. Employers (schools) are liable for discriminatory acts of their employees if they did not take reasonable steps to prevent such acts. Employees can be liable for acts where an employer took reasonable steps to prevent such acts.

The 'Protected Characteristics' within equality law are:

AGE – A person of a particular age, or range of ages. Age discrimination does not apply to provision of education, but it does apply to employees.

DISABILITY – A person has a disability if they have or have had a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It includes discrimination arising from something

connected with their disability such as use aids. Medical conditions such as HIV, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis are all considered to be disabilities.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT – A person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (the process of changing physiological or other attributes of gender). Children as young as five may begin to show signs of gender dysphoria and therefore it is relevant to school environments.

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP – Marriage and civil partnership discrimination does not apply to the provision of education but it does apply to employees and parents.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY – Maternity refers to the period of 26 weeks after the birth, which reflects the period of a woman's ordinary maternity leave entitlement in the employment context. In employment, it also covers the period up to the end of any additional maternity leave.

RACE – A person's colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin. It includes Travellers and Gypsy Roma as well as White British people.

RELIGION AND BELIEF – Religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition. Religion and belief discrimination does nor prevent a school from carrying out collective worship or other curriculum-based activities, but children may be withdrawn from acts of collective worship.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION – A person's sexual orientation towards the same sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. Although children may not identify as gay or lesbian when very young, promotion of sexual orientation equality is still relevant in Primary school settings.

Employees:

Our school values diversity amongst the staff. In all appointments the most suitable candidate will be appointed on professional criteria and recruitment carried out in a manner consistent with equal opportunities practice. Care will be taken when placing job advertisements that no discrete group is excluded.

Identification:

Staff at Meopham Community Academy will observe children at play and in classrooms for unacceptable behaviour. Suitable counselling will be given at the time, but repeated abuse will be recorded for discussion with the Headteacher, parents and governing body. Staff will also be encouraged to adopt the same approach with their colleagues and parents, with a view of setting an example for the children to follow.

This document will be circulated for staff and governors and training made available to those who request it, where possible. An 'open door' policy will continue to operate at Meopham Community Academy in order to ensure that parents may discuss their concerns with the Headteacher and staff. Equally, early advice should be given of any factors that may affect a child's performance and/or behaviour at school. Consultations may be sought with professional bodies and parents in appropriate circumstances.

Positive Action:

Not to be confused with positive discrimination, positive action will be fostered in line with best current practice:

- Staff will continue to use examples in their teaching to demonstrate the benefits of a mixed society and the contributions made to our society by individuals of all genders, races, age groups etc.
- Performance appraisals of teaching staff will include steps taken to promote positive action for equal opportunities
- Teamwork is encouraged in all aspects of school life to show the advantages of pooling experience, knowledge and different points of view
- Job vacancies will be widely advertised to promote a variety of candidates

Daily Procedures:

- Children, parents and staff will be given equal treatment, equal opportunity to voice their opinion and equal access to resources
- Teaching material is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance with this policy
- Positive action will continue to be rewarded and made known to the wider school community
- Assembly times will reinforce good behaviour in the area of equal opportunities
- Staff meetings will include equal opportunities issues and its inclusion in curriculum activity
- The school council will allow children to have an active input on matters concerning day to day issues.

Involving Parents:

As with all school policies, there is a critical role to be played by parents, including the reinforcement of good behaviour in our community. Parents will continue to be informed of their child's behaviour, good and bad, including any aspects of attitudes towards others which gives rise to concern. All forms of discrimination by any child within the school is treated seriously and records are kept of any such incidents. It is always stressed that such behaviour is unacceptable. Incidents are reported to the Headteacher and a decision will be made as to involvement of the parents of the children concerned. In the event that formal disciplinary proceedings are contemplated, the governing body will be consulted and a plan of action agreed. Continued unacceptable behaviour could result in exclusion procedures.

This policy will be revisited on a regular basis in order to keep abreast of current legislative requirements.