



## **Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust**

February 2016

### **Equality Policy**

#### **Rationale**

This Equality Policy for Torfield School and Saxon Mount Community School Federation brings together and updates all previous policies, schemes and action plans around equality including those that we had previously 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 to devalue any individuals within our community. We are further 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 note the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This partnership is further referenced in our Child Protection Policy, LAC Policy Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy and our teaching and learning policy and other school policies. All subject schemes of work also refer to progress and achievement and wellbeing for each child.

Our Equality Policy is inclusive of each of our whole school communities – pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and partner agencies – with whom we have engaged and who have been actively involved in and contributed to its development.

The purpose of this 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 and
- foster good relations between groups.

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

## **Our schools within the wider context:**

Hastings is a seaside town with a high percentage of parents who are out of work or claiming benefits. Many of our pupils come from disadvantaged wards within the town. See RAISE online info and SEF information.

### **Torfield School**

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation. Torfield School is a special school for pupils with a range of learning difficulties including Autism and Communication and Language difficulties, for pupils aged 4 -11 who have a statement of SEN / EHC Plan. The school has 80 pupils currently on roll, all of whom are from vulnerable groups, often directly as a result of their SEN. In addition, 3% of pupils are CLA pupils, approximately 5% come from ethnic minority groups and approximately 40-50% are entitled to free school meals.

### **Saxon Mount Community School**

The national demographic presents an ever-changing picture in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and social deprivation. Saxon Mount School is a special school for pupils with a range of learning difficulties including Autism, Communication and language difficulties, for pupils aged 11-16 who have a statement of SEN / EHC Plan. The school has 122 currently on roll all of whom are from vulnerable groups, often directly as a result of their SEN. In addition, 7% of the pupils are LAC pupils, 3.5% come from ethnic minority groups and approximately to 50% are entitled to free school meals.

## **Overall aims of our Equality Policy**

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

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. Issues relating to adults within the school community can be embraced under these themes and reflected in the action plan.

### **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 differences

- 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 school and within our local community
- Excellence - we aim to inspire and recognise high personal and collective achievement throughout our school community, the UK and the wider world.
- 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 vision statement about Equality**

Torfield School and Saxon Mount Community School Federation seeks to foster a safe, welcoming and respectful environment, which allows 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 we 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. We therefore cannot achieve equality for all by treating everyone the same.

We will build on our 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 and have sought to involve the whole school community in the process in order to ensure better outcomes for all.

They are also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**We will ensure we identify opportunities for promoting our vision, the key concepts and our duties on equality legislation across all aspects of school life, including in 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 learning activities
- children and young people with SEN, their parents and partner agencies
- preparation for entry to the school
- school policies relating to pupils, as well as staff
- breaks and lunchtimes
- the provision of school meals
- supporting pupil interaction with peers
- opportunities for assessment and accreditation
- exam arrangements, teacher assessments and statutory assessments
- behaviour management approaches, sanctions and exclusion procedures
- school clubs, activities and school trips
- the school's arrangements for working with other agencies
- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education
- learning, teaching and the planned curriculum which is also used to promote equality
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- grouping of pupils
- homework
- access to school facilities
- activities to enrich the curriculum, for example, a visitor to the school or Educational offsite visits
- school sports
- employees' and staff welfare
- additional support provided to pupils

### **The roles and responsibilities within our school community**

Our Executive Headteacher and Head of School will:

- ensure that staff, parents/carers, pupils/students and where appropriate visitors and contractors are informed about the Equality Policy
- oversee the effective implementation of the policy
- ensure staff have access to training or information which helps to implement the policy
- develop partnerships with external agencies regarding the policy so that the school's actions are in line with the best advice available
- monitor the policy and review it according to our cycle (4 years), reporting to the Governing Body annually on the effectiveness of the policy and publishing 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 Directors will:

- receive information via the AAB relating to this policy and regular (at least annually) information via the Health and Safety report regarding any known non-compliance with this policy
- support the Executive Headteacher in implementing any actions necessary

- ensure the school gives regard to this policy when engaging with parents and partner agencies about the policy
- evaluate and review the policy in line with its cycle

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 Headteacher, provide advice/support in dealing with any incidents/issues
- assist in implementing reviews of this policy

Our pupils will:

- be taught about equalities wherever appropriate in the curriculum
- be expected to act in accordance with the Policy
- be encouraged to actively support the Policy

Our parents/carers will:

- have access to the Policy via the website
- be expected to actively support the Policy, particularly when visiting the school
- be expected 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 school staff will:

- be involved in the development / implementation 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

### **How we developed our Policy - Participation and Involvement**

The development of this policy involved the whole of our schools' communities. We have 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.

We asked for our pupils' views through the School Council termly meetings and a member of SMT interviews all pupils individually at least yearly with to discuss key aspects of school life. In addition, our pupils are invited to share their views with staff and peers during lessons and tutor times/class times, with support being made available to ensure difficulties with communication do not present as a barrier to this vital process.

Parents are able to share their views through parents evening discussions and by completing parents' views' questionnaires. They are also invited to share and discuss

aspects of their child's provision during the formal annual review of Statement / EHCP process. We contact our more vulnerable parents, some of whom have SEN themselves, by telephone to arrange a time for them to come in for formal meetings; some parents find it easier to respond to this supportive measure. As part of the sharing of achievement process in the Annual Review, we read through school reports with them and annotate their responses, ensuring that their views are documented.

Staff in the schools have been invited, through staff meetings, working groups, CPD opportunities and informal discussions with colleagues, to share ideas and vision for school priorities and the pupils' needs in terms of their learning, development and well-being.

The school governing body has used opportunities to share views relating to policies within the school and especially looking at progress of the more vulnerable groups such as all pupils with SEN and all CLA pupils. As part of this discussion, Governors regularly visit the school with the specific focus of looking at a particular vulnerable group or subject area and reporting back their findings to the whole board.

The aim of the school is to use these procedures to allow for continued dialogue between pupils, parents, people in the community, staff and governors who in turn monitor our Equality Policy on a regular basis.

### **How we developed our Policy - using information**

We have used data and other information about our schools. Our information helps us to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against certain individuals or groups and that the positive duties are promoted.

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. External advisors help us moderate our information as do Ofsted and the Local Authority. Incidents involving deliberate bullying are very rare due in part to robust responses to any incidents involving discussion time, Sulp sessions and opportunities for reparation, and also due to the curriculum, including input on fostering positive relationships and friendship issues delivered through the PHSE curriculum.

Racist incidents are rare at Saxon Mount School, numbering 3 in the last academic year (2014 15). These are responded to very firmly: pupils are always issued with a detention, their parents are informed and they are required to attend a special session with Additional Support Team staff who explain the seriousness of using prejudicial language. There have been no racist incidents at Torfield School for several years and the school response would be to address the issue through Sulp or PSHE in order to promote learner understanding.

We collect a range of information relating to incidents of harassment and bullying, including those relating to racism, homophobia, faith, disability and gender. As previously stated, these are rare occurrences. Saxon Mount School Behaviour Policy includes specific reference to the use of offensive and discriminatory language. Pupils found to be using this type of language take part in a session looking at discriminatory language and awareness. If the pupil reoffends after this session they are subject to the more serious sanctions available in the school. In the SMT and pupil discussions that

take place twice a year the vast majority of pupils report to feeling happy, safe at school and not bullied or threatened.

The SEN of the pupils in both Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools must be clearly understood and taken into account, as approximately 50% of pupils in each school have an ASD diagnosis and at least a further 25% have speech, language or communication difficulties. The very nature of autism and its impact on pupils' communication and social interaction must be recognised in this policy. Our pupils may behave in a manner which, in wider society, could, in terms of equality, be considered offensive. However, this may be a direct result of lack of social awareness or of difficulties with communication and interaction, all of which are very common features of autism. This does not mean that issues regarding Equality will not be challenged, but rather that, in addition to any challenge, targeted learning both within the discrete and wider curriculum and also use of Social Use of language Programs may be implemented to support the understanding of these issues.

The Saxon Mount School and Torfield School's self-evaluation documents include information on the school context as well as on pupil outcomes. Progress is at least good and likely to be judged outstanding at Saxon Mount School and there are no variations between vulnerable groups therefore we can state with some accuracy that pupils 'needs are well met and good provision is made. The same can be said for Torfield School where progress is also good and working towards being outstanding; There are also no variations between vulnerable groups. Saxon Mount LAC pupils (who make up approximately 10% of the school population at any one time) report in PEP meetings that they all feel valued and safe in school, acknowledging that if they had a problem they would know who they could speak to. At Torfield School approximately 5% of the pupils are in the CLA category at any one time. They also virtually all report in annual reviews that they feel safe at school.

We also value the more qualitative information given to us in a less formal manner through pupil/learner voice. . Other means of collecting such information include through the school council and, when available, via the school nurse. During tutor times/class times, class discussion activities and during breaktime, pupils are encouraged to share their own experiences both in and out of school. This is done on an informal basis although any significant concerns are referred using the concern slip system to Class Teachers/Tutors or also, at Saxon Mount, to members of the Additional Support team, or direct to SMT. Pupils are also given formal opportunities to comment on how they are feeling during SMT discussions, Annual Reviews and as part of the PEP process for CLA pupils.

The schools have weekly Multi Agency Pupil Progress Meetings which involve health professionals (school nurses), where available, and a social services colleague. These meetings are aimed at sharing information about the child's academic and social progress as well as that relating to health, welfare or social services involvement. The schools also have established links with Sussex Police and the school liaison police officers, who have led assemblies on keeping safe and have been involved in contributing to the delivery of lessons within the PSHE curriculum, on safety the law, and have shared information appropriate for a variety of age ranges and needs. At both schools the Police Liaison Officer also supports school staff in addressing and challenging behaviour that could be unsafe or which could place the pupil at risk of harm or at risk of becoming a victim of crime or a perpetrator of crime in the future.

We have established good links with our local and our wider community. We welcome them into our school and we ensure pupils have regular opportunities to visit and participate in the world outside school. From this, we can support learning about equality issues outside school and can support ways of addressing them within school.

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

### **Commissioned services (buying in services)**

Increasingly we are directly responsible for the purchase of goods and services. When buying goods and services from external suppliers, we aim to ensure that equality issues and duties are taken into account:

To the best of our ability, we aim to ensure that contract conditions require contractors to comply with the relevant legislation and with our equality 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 the 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 with people who are not disabled. This includes discrimination in relation to recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals, training and employment practices 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 or require job applicants to complete a generic, comprehensive 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.

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

Our staff team understand their equality duties and the differing needs of protected groups within our school community.

Listed below are examples of relevant training which members of our team have attended:-

- Health and safety co-ordinators' role
- Health and Safety reporting incidents
- Managing Behaviour effectively
- Supporting Pupils who are CLA
- Safer Recruitment Training
- Prevent Training

## 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 of disabled people or sexism. We will take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate any such behaviour.

Through our Performance Management process staff reviewees and reviewers evaluate training undertaken and identify developmental needs and further training opportunities.

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 e.g. skin colour or disability. Through our school ethos and curriculum, we want our pupils/students 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 perpetrators and their families and education for our children, young people and communities. The school's responses in terms of sanctions and opportunities for sessions to learning about prejudicial language and behaviour, are outlined in more detail in the school Behaviour Policy. Parents are informed directly by staff about any involvement in bullying or prejudicial incidents and support the pupil and the school in addressing the issues openly with their child in collaboration with school staff.

## Implementation, monitoring and reviewing

This policy was first published June 2012. It was reviewed in January 2016. It will be actively promoted and disseminated, it will appear on the School website for parents to access and will be the subject of discussion annually at a school council meeting.

Implementation, monitoring and review are the responsibility of our Senior Leadership Team and our governors, all of whom who have agreed and published this policy which sets out our priorities. We will report annually to the AAB on issues relating to the policy and consider whether our policy and related objectives have furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular educational outcomes for all within our school community with reference to the protected groups.

January 2016

Chair of AAB..... Date.....

Executive Headteacher..... Date.....

