



EQUALITY POLICY

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Commitment

We are committed to equality, inclusion, and promoting and celebrating diversity in all aspects of our work. As a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, we value the different contributions and experiences of school communities. Catholic social teaching is at the heart of our commitment to equality. We believe in the dignity of the individual and will work to enhance that principle.

None of us is an island, autonomous and independent from others. We can only build the future by standing together, including everyone.

Pope Francis

Scope

This policy applies to all academies within the Saint John Southworth Catholic Academy Trust.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure that our obligations and duties under the [Equalities Act 2010](#) are discharged effectively.

Our Duties

We have general and specific public sector equality duties.

General Duty

The general duty covers certain protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment – and requires the SJSCAT and its schools to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
2. Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people of all characteristics (those who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not)
3. Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

This means that:

- decision makers in SJSCAT schools must be aware of the duty to have “due regard” when making a decision or taking an action and must assess whether it may have particular implications for people with particular protected characteristics
- Trust and school leaders should consider equality implications before and at the time that they develop policy and take decisions, not as an afterthought, and they need to keep them under review on a continuing basis.
- the general duty has to be integrated into the carrying out of Trust and school functions, and the analysis necessary to comply with the duty has to be carried out

seriously, rigorously and with an open mind – it is not just a question of ticking boxes or following a particular process.

- schools cannot delegate responsibility for carrying out the duty to anyone else.

Specific Duty

The specific duties require the SJSCAT and its schools to:

1. publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty
2. prepare and publish equality objectives.

Published information should be updated annually. Equality objectives should be monitored, reviewed and published every four years.

Exceptions

Schools with a religious character have certain exceptions to the religion or belief provisions which allow them to discriminate because of religion or belief in relation to admissions and in access to any benefit, facility or service. These exceptions allow such schools to conduct themselves in a way which is compatible with their religious ethos. The Equality Act does not permit less favourable treatment of a pupil because they do not (or no longer) belong to the school's religion. Nor does it allow them to discriminate on religious grounds in other respects, such as excluding a pupil or subjecting a pupil to any other detriment. It also does not permit them to discriminate in relation to other protected characteristics.

Single sex schools are able to refuse to admit pupils of the opposite sex.

Disability

Provisions

The provisions relating to disability discrimination are different from those for other protected characteristics in that schools may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favourably than a person who is not disabled and may have to make changes to practices to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that a disabled person can benefit from provision to the same extent as a person without that disability can.

Definition

The Act defines disability as a

'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.'

Reasonable Adjustments

When they have to be made

Our schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the following circumstances:

- Where something a school does places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage
- Schools will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils
- Schools are not subject to the requirement of reasonable adjustment duty concerned with make alterations to physical features because this is already considered as part of their planning duties.

The SJSCAT and its schools will aim to ensure that disabled pupils can play as full a part as possible in school life. The reasonable adjustments duty will help support this aim.

Auxiliary aids and services (“things or persons which help”)

The SJSCAT recognises that disabled pupils with special educational needs may need auxiliary aids or services, for example hearing loops; adaptive keyboards and special software. There is a duty to provide auxiliary aids as part of the reasonable adjustment duty.

Auxiliary aids and services may be provided as part of an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) but if the child does not have an EHCP or an aid is not provided as part of an EHCP, our schools will have to consider whether to provide auxiliary aids as a reasonable adjustment.

Decisions will depend on the facts of each individual case - the nature of the aid or service and the existence of arrangements with local authorities – and will be based on an assessment of reasonableness. If an adjustment is reasonable then it will be made.

Our schools will adopt a strategic approach and embed planning for disabled pupils into development and improvement planning processes. This will include considering potential reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils generally. Decisions will be based on an assessment of reasonableness, taking account of factors such as cost, effectiveness, effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements and aids available from local authorities.

Accessibility planning for disabled pupils

The Trust and its schools will carry out accessibility planning for disabled pupils, which aims to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
- improve the physical environment to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided
- improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

As required, SJSCAT schools will establish and publish an Accessibility Plan, which will be reviewed every three years. Our schools will have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans. School SEN information reports will contain information about accessibility plans and how they will achieve the aims above.

Responsibilities

The SJSCAT Trust Board

The SJSCAT board of directors has overall responsibility and will:

- make sure that schools comply with all aspects of equality law
- comply with duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people
- establish the Trust's equality policy and monitor compliance
- make sure that other SJSCAT policies promote the general equality duty
- be aware of the duty to have "due regard" when making a decision or taking an action
- assess whether decisions may have particular implications for people with particular protected characteristics
- consider equality implications before and when developing policy
- integrate equality into the carrying out of governance functions
- consult or engage with members of the school community affected by decisions and with people who have special knowledge which can inform the Trust's approach

Local Governing Bodies

Local governing bodies are responsible for making sure that the requirements of the Equality Act and Trust policy are met locally. They will:

- make sure that their school complies with all aspects of equality law
- comply with duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people
- make sure that school policies promote the general equality duty
- be aware of the duty to have "due regard" when making a decision or taking an action
- assess whether decisions may have particular implications for people with particular protected characteristics
- consider equality implications before and when developing school policy
- integrate equality into the carrying out of local governance functions
- work with headteachers to set local equality objectives every four years and monitor progress regularly
- collect and use equality information that informs understanding about the impact of decisions and policy on those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- ensure that equality information is reviewed each year and published
- consult or engage with members of the school community affected by decisions and with people who have special knowledge which can inform the school's approach
- establish and publish an Accessibility Plan and review every three years

Senior Leaders

The CEO, SJSCAT executive, Headteachers and other senior leaders are responsible for implementing this policy and will:

- play a lead role with the SJSCAT Board and/or the local governing body to set and equality objectives every four years and monitor progress regularly
- ensure that equality information is updated annually and published on school websites
- ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support
- take appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination
- provide equality information and data for the SJSCAT or local governing body so that the impact of policy, decisions or actions can be assessed, for example recruitment, staffing, curriculum policy, progress and attainment by pupil groups, exclusion and suspension by pupil groups, bullying, prejudice-related incidents
- prepare an Accessibility Plan for LGB approval, publish and review every three years
- comply with duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people
- keep records of prejudice-related incidents

Staff

All staff are expected to:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in the school
- follow school policy when dealing with prejudice-related incidents
- identify and challenge bias and stereotyping in the curriculum
- keep up to date with equalities legislation and training relevant to their work.
- treat work colleagues with respect and in line with the principles of this policy

Relevant legislation and guidance

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[DfE Guidance The Equality Act 2010 and Schools](#)

[EHRC Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments](#)

[RCDOW Racial Justice Equality and Diversity Resources](#)

Associated policies and documents

Equality matters in everything we do as a Catholic academy trust. The following policies and documents are particularly relevant.

Equality information and objectives ([link to school websites](#))

Accessibility plans ([link to school websites](#))

[SJSCAT SEND Policy](#)

SEND information reports and local offer ([link to school websites](#))

Admission arrangements ([link to school websites](#))

[Catholic Education Service Model Employment Documents](#)

