

# STOKE NEWINGTON SCHOOL, MEDIA, ARTS & SCIENCE COLLEGE

## GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

### Legislative Context

The Equality Act (2006) amended the requirements of the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). It added to the duty to eliminate sexual discrimination and sexual harassment, the duty to promote gender equality.

### Social Context

We understand that despite 30 years of individual legal rights to sex equality there is still widespread discrimination and persistent gender inequality. Both sexes suffer from the stereotyping of their roles and needs and such stereotyping has to be understood, challenged and overcome.

### The General Duty

In accordance with our school's mission statement and values, we welcome the statutory General Equality Duty. In compliance with the General Duty, Stoke Newington School has due regard for the need to, and works to:

- Eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination
- Eliminate sexual harassment
- Promote gender equality

By unlawful sexual discrimination we mean treating one person less favourably than another on the ground of sex or gender. We understand that this could be done directly but that it could also occur indirectly. Indirect discrimination means that a particular policy or practice may impact more negatively on one gender than on the other, or may favour one gender to the disadvantage of the other.

By sexual harassment we mean behaviour or remarks based on a person's sex or gender, perceived to be unpleasant, threatening, offensive or demeaning to the dignity and self esteem of the recipient or subject. We see such behaviour as also damaging to the perpetrator (*See – Behaviour/Anti Bullying Policy and HR - Harassment and Bullying Policy*).

We understand 'sex' to refer to the **biological** differences between males and females and 'gender' to refer to the wider **social** roles and responsibilities which structure our lives. By promoting gender equality our intention is to recognise and help overcome those lasting and embedded patterns of advantage and disadvantage which are based on socially ascribed gender stereotypes and assumptions.

We understand that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to treat boys and girls, and women and men differently, if that action is aimed at overcoming previous, current or possible future disadvantage.

2.

We will take steps to counteract the effects of any past discrimination in staff recruitment. Where we are uncertain whether there is a genuine occupational requirement for preference to be given to the employment of someone of a particular gender we will seek specialist advice.

We understand the three parts of the duty to be different, but that they should normally support each other. However, we are aware that achieving one may not lead to achieving all three.

In taking due regards we will exercise the principles of proportionality and relevance. By this we mean that the weight we give to gender equality will be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. The greater the relevance of a function of gender equality, the greater regard we will pay to it.

### **The Specific Duties**

We welcome the responsibility to think and act more strategically about gender equality. To meet the specific duties, and guided by the Code of Practice prepared by the Equal Opportunities Commission, we have prepared, published and implemented, and will maintain, a Gender Equality Action Plan which contains our current objectives. This is attached to and forms an essential part of this policy.

We are working to develop our understanding of the major gender equality issues in our school's functions and services. In order to do this we:

- Collect and analyse school data and other gender equality relevant information, including data about our local area.
- Consult all staff, pupils, parents and relevant local communities.
- Review all our school policies and practices to assess the ways in which we might impact on gender equality.
- Ensure Governors, staff, pupils, parents and others in our school are accountable and understand their responsibilities with regard to preventing discrimination and harassment and promoting gender equality.
- Assess and address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- Publish and implement the Action Plan with our proposal objectives and actions.

We will:

- Set out the results of reviews, consultations and impact assessments.
- Report on progress annually via the GRCC and set further objectives where necessary.
- Review and revise the Policy and Action Plan at least every three years.

### **Responsibilities**

All Governors, staff, volunteers, pupils and their families need to develop an appropriate understanding of, and act in accordance with, the school's Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan. In addition:

**The School Governors** are responsible for ensuring that the School prepares, publishes, implements, reports on and reviews the Gender Equality Policy.

Equality Policy and Action Plan (including budget requirements), and in particular the employment implication of meeting the Duty.

**The Headteacher works with SMT to ensure that –**

- The Policy and Action Plan are implemented
- Staff recruitment, training opportunities and conditions promote gender equality
- All staff, pupils and their parents are consulted regarding, and are aware of the school's responsibilities to meet, the Gender Equality Duty
- Existing and planned policies are assessed for the ways in which they impact on gender equality
- Curriculum planning, learning and teaching methods, classroom organisation and assessment procedures, behaviour management, school journeys and extended school activities take account of the need to promote gender equality
- Incidents of sexual/gender bullying or harassment are dealt with according to our Behaviour/Anti Bullying policy.
- Visitors to the school, or those who use the premises, are aware of the Gender Equality policy and action plan.

**All staff** have a responsibility to deal with incidents of sexual harassment or bullying; help eliminate unlawful discrimination; prepare and/or help deliver a curriculum, learning and teaching methods, classroom organisation and assessment procedures, behaviour management, school journeys and extended school activities (including work with parents) that take account of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote gender equality.

**Pupils and parents** have a proportionate responsibility to understand and act in accordance with the policy, as do **visitors** to the school.

These and other responsibilities are outlined in detail in our Gender Equality Action Plan which is attached to and forms part of this policy.

We believe that, even having the Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, there is still widespread discrimination and gender inequality in society. We believe that having this gender equality policy and action plan will:

- Support us in our decision making and policy development
- Give us a clearer understanding of the needs of staff, pupils and their families.
- Enable us to provide better quality services which meet varied needs.
- Help us target our resources more effectively
- Help promote increased confidence in our school
- Make more effective use of our workforce

We recognise that both sexes can suffer from sexual stereotyping and that sometimes the same policies and practices can impact differently on men and women and boys and girls. We will make adjustments if this is found to be the case with any of our policies and practices.

We also recognise that girls and boys, women and men, can experience different forms of discrimination depending on, among other things, their ethnicity, belief, sexual orientation, age or disability and we will take this complexity into consideration.

In these ways we still strive to improve the situation for, and the relationships between, men and women and boys and girls within our school and wider community.

### **Single Sex Provision**

Where we provide for one sex only, this is to help meet the different needs of boys and girls (men and women), needs often arising out of historical and current stereotyping and unjust gender discrimination, or where there is an issue of physical intimacy or embarrassment to be considered. We do not provide activities, classes, facilities, benefits or services for one sex only if this would amount to less favourable treatment of the other sex, or where it would promote gender inequality and stereotyping.

We do not deny one sex the same opportunities as the other and where we provide for one sex only we ensure there are equivalent and proportionate facilities, benefits or services for the other sex. We do not offer different curriculum choices to boys and girls, and where there are curriculum options we ensure that these are not offered in such a way that boys and girls are steered into making choices based on gender stereotypes.

If requests for additional single sex activities, facilities or provision which appear to maintain or promote gender inequalities come from pupils, families or the community, these will be considered and legal advice sought.

### **Breaches of Gender Equality Policy**

We understand that eliminating gender discrimination and harassment and promoting gender equality is in part an education function and a matter of cultural change. Where possible, breaches of the policy will be dealt with in a manner appropriate to the level of the breach, and with the intention of bringing about the relevant changes. More serious breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our school's anti bullying and harassment procedures, and the disciplinary procedures for staff.

Where safeguarding issues based on sex and gender come to the attention of the school these will be dealt with according to our child protection procedures.

### **Consultation; publishing, staff, pupils and parent development**

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with governors, staff, pupils, parents and members of our local community. These consultations have contributed to developing the awareness among governors, staff, pupils and parents of the ongoing need to eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination and harassment and to promote gender equality.

Copies of this policy are available in the school office, on our website, in the staff handbook and in staff/department policy folders.

We will continue, as outlined in our action plan, to develop awareness of what constitutes unlawful gender discrimination and harassment, and of the need to eliminate this and to promote gender equality.

**Signed:.....(Chair of Governors)**

**Date:.....**

**Gender Equality Policy Review date: March 2009 (no later than)**

**Gender Equality Duty – Guidance for Schools – attached**

## Gender Equality Duty and Domestic Violence Guidance for Schools

**The Gender Equality Duty** is a legal requirement which came into force in April 2007. It requires all public bodies, including schools to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women and
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.

This is called the General Duty and includes domestic violence and sexual bullying, violence and exploitation.

Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of women's inequality and has a devastating effect.

- At least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence (Source: Dept of Health (2002))
- In 40% to 66% of domestic abuse cases, the same person is directly abusing the children (Source: Edelson J (1999) *The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering*)
- 29 children are known to have died as a direct result of child contact arrangements (Source: *29 Child Homicides, Women's Aid, 2005*)
- On average 1 in 4 women report a physical assault by a current or former partner in their lifetime (Source: *Data from 1996 British Crime Survey*)

### Specific Duties

The General Duty is accompanied by several specific duties. These are:

- To prepare and publish a **Gender Equality Policy**, showing how the school will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives.
- Consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any **gender pay gap**.
- **Gather and use information** on how the schools policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To **consult** stakeholders (i.e. teachers, governors, pupils) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
- To **assess the impact** of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- To **implement** the actions set out in its policy within three years unless it is unreasonable or impractical to do so.

The **General Duty** applies to all Public bodies or authorities; of which the biggest group is schools, colleges and universities. Individual schools were required to have written and published a Gender Equality Policy by April 2007. This policy should layout how the school will meet its obligations under the general and specific duties. Legal responsibility for the implementation of the gender equality duty rests with the school's governing body.

2.

Schools are required to make a co-ordinated effort to tackle inequality and ensure that all pupils are able to fully achieve their potential. Young people are very aware of, and in some cases acceptant of violent and abusive behaviour. A recent study found that 40% of young people have experienced some form of gender based violence. 59% felt they did not have enough information to advise and help their friends (Source: *EVAW Poll, 2006*) and many young people believed it was acceptable to hit a woman.

Schools need to consider how they can support students who are victims of gender based violence. A key way is to look at the issues around domestic violence, rape and sexual consent within the PSHEE curriculum and to identify a whole school approach to prevention work. Many schools have already started to develop this kind of work; some of which have been evaluated.

### **Key Issues and Recommendations for Schools to Address:**

- Active recruitment of male teachers
- Teacher training to address gender equality and violence against women as a core part of a teachers' theoretical and practical framework
- Addressing gender stereotyping in subject choices, careers advice and work related learning.
- Monitoring and addressing sexist and homophobic bullying and harassment.
- Challenging young people's attitudes to gender violence.
- Awareness of the information children receive from the internet, films and magazines where women are not portrayed as being equal.
- Assessing the needs of children affected by domestic violence and abuse.
- Gender equality issues within the staff workforce.
- Objectives that specifically address the causes of the gender pay gap by eliminating gender stereotyping.

### **Gender Impact Assessments**

A gender equality policy needs to include the details of how the impact (or likely impact) of how the schools' policies and practices on gender equality will be assessed. This should include the curriculum; uniform; Every Child Matters objectives; admissions; discipline; sports and careers and work experience.

There are other issues closely related to domestic violence and also matters of gender equality;

- Teenage pregnancy

There is a strong link between low educational attainment, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence.

- Nearly 40% of teenage mothers leave school with no qualifications.
- 70% of teenage mothers have experienced adolescent domestic violence (SOURCE: *Kulkami 2006*).

Schools need to address young mothers' disengagement from education and also acknowledge their desire to learn. They need to examine the barriers young women face to accessing education and childcare.

## 8.

The Government's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy aims to increase to 60% the participation of mothers aged 16-19 in education, training or employment by 2010, to reduce their risk of long term social exclusion.

The DfES has produced guidance on the education of school age parents for head teachers and local authorities.

### **Sexual Bullying**

Sexual bullying can affect boys and girls. All incidences of sexual bullying and harassment should be recorded and sexual bullying should be included in the schools anti bullying policy.

Sexual bullying can include:

- Using sexual words to put someone down.
- Looks and comments about appearance, attractiveness, emerging puberty.
- Inappropriate and uninvited touching.
- Sexual innuendoes and propositions.
- Pornographic material.
- Graffiti with a sexual content.
- Sexual assault or rape.

Teachers should be trained to deal with the issues and a peer mentoring scheme should be set up for pupils. Whole school awareness campaigns should aim to stop sexual bullying and promote gender equality.

Further information can be found at:

- [www.eoc.org.uk](http://www.eoc.org.uk)
- [www.cwasu.org](http://www.cwasu.org)
- [www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)
- [www.gldvp.org.uk](http://www.gldvp.org.uk)