



**Maria Fidelis**  
Catholic School FCJ

<b>Equalities Policy</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Curriculum
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<b>Approved By Governing Body</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
<b>Frequency of Review</b>	Annually
<b>Next review Date</b>	Autumn 2025

### **The FCJ Schools' Vision**

Our vision is that FCJ schools are communities of personal and academic excellence.

Strong in companionship, the unique giftedness of every person in these faith communities is recognised, nourished and celebrated.

Our hope and expectation is that, through God's grace working in us all, each young person grows into their best self, with zest for life and the generosity and confidence to use their talents and gifts in the service of others.

# **Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ**

## **Equalities Policy**

### **Vision Statement**

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### **Introduction**

Maria Fidelis is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth. We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups. We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998. These duties are also wholly consistent with Catholic Social Teaching.

### **Legislation and guidance**

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

- The Equality Act 2010, which introduced the public sector equality duty and protects people from discrimination
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, which require schools to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the public sector equality duty and to publish equality objectives

This document is also based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance: The Equality Act 2010 and schools.

### **Guiding principles**

In fulfilling our legal obligations, we are guided by seven principles:

#### **Principle 1: All learners are of equal value**

We see all students as children of God and of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender identity.

#### **Principle 2: We recognize and respect diversity**

Treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate, but are differentiated, as appropriate, to take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognized
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of all individuals, young and old, are recognized.

**Principle 3: We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging**

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between genders and gender-identities, and an absence of sexual harassment or discrimination.

**Principle 4: Staff recruitment, retention and development**

Policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whether or not they are a member of a trade union
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender identity.

**Principle 5: We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist**

In addition to avoiding or minimizing possible negative impacts, we take opportunities to maximize positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- people of different gender identities.

**Principle 6: We consult widely**

People affected by a policy or activity should be consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. We involve:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- union representatives
- people from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- people of different ages [e.g., pupils, staff and parents]
- people of different gender identities.

**Principle 7: Society as a whole should benefit**

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- people of different gender identities.

**Purpose of the Policy**

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protected characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against children or treat them less favourably because of their sex (gender), race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy or maternity.

Age and marriage and civil partnership are also “protected characteristics” but are not part of the school provisions related to pupils.

The Act requires all public organisations, including schools to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and two specific duties:

**The Public Sector Equality Duty or “general duty”**

This requires all public organisations, including schools, to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

**Two “specific duties”**

This requires all public organisations, including schools to:

1. Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty
2. Publish Equality objectives at least every 4 years, which are specific and measurable

This policy describes how the school is meeting these statutory duties and is in line with national guidance. It includes information about how the school is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and also provides guidance to staff and outside visitors about our approach to promoting equality.

Appendix 2 is a checklist of key equality considerations

Appendix 3 shows the school’s Equality Objectives for 2023-2025 in an Equality Action Plan

The purpose of the policy is to inform objectives that will:

- a. Promote equality of opportunity for members of identified groups
- b. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and
- c. Foster good relations between different groups in terms of:
  - Sex
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender & Gender Identity
  - Marital or civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Membership of a union
  - Socio economic background
  - Gender reassignment

**What we are doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation**

- We take account of equality issues in relation to admissions and exclusions; the way we provide education for our students and the way we provide access for them to facilities and services.
- We promote tolerance, friendship and understanding of all religions and cultures through different aspects of our curriculum. This includes teaching in RE, PSHE and Citizenship, but also activities in other curriculum areas. For example, as part of teaching and learning in English/reading, students will be introduced to literature from a range of cultures
- We hold assemblies dealing with relevant issues. Students will be encouraged to take a lead in such assemblies and we will also invite external speakers to contribute
- All students are encouraged to participate in the school’s activities, such as sports clubs, extra-curricular club and cadets.
- We have developed links with people and groups who have specialist knowledge about particular characteristics, which helps inform and develop our approach.

- We are aware of the Reasonable Adjustment duty for disabled students – designed to enhance access and participation to the level of non-disabled students and stop disabled children being placed at a disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.
- The Headteacher ensures that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy so that no one is discriminated against when it comes to employment, promotion or training opportunities.
- We ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones.
- We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt and review any policy or procedure and whenever we make significant decisions about the day-to-day life of the school.
- We make a record of each specific equality consideration and this is available for review if required.
- We actively promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and by creating an environment which champions respect for all.
- Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and we do not discriminate against pupils by treating them less favourably on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

### **Admissions**

At Maria Fidelis Catholic School, the Governing Body is the Admissions Authority for the school and makes decisions as to admissions arrangements. It is their duty to ensure that such arrangements are compliant with the Admissions Codes and other relevant legislation. The governing body must ensure that:

- admissions criteria are clear, fair, objective and transparent;
- arrangements are as simple as possible;
- all parents' preferences are treated on an equal basis;
- no discrimination is applied on the basis of race, sex, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

However, in a Catholic school, priority can be afforded to baptised Catholic children where the school is oversubscribed and that action is in accordance with the school's published admissions policy.

In addition, and for all schools, age is not a protected characteristic in relation to pupils, thereby allowing schools to admit and organise pupils in age groups.

### **Religious observance**

There are some exceptions in the Act that apply to all schools and some which are specific to schools with a religious character (faith schools). Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ is a faith school and the daily act of collective worship is an exemption, which applies to all schools in relation to the Act's religion or belief provisions. We are permitted to have acts of worship or other forms of collective religious observance and will not be acting unlawfully if an equivalent act of worship is not provided for other faiths. With this in mind, we respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

### **Behaviour, Suspensions and Attendance**

The school Policy on Behaviour - Rewards, Sanctions and Suspensions - takes full account of the new duties under the Equality Act. We make reasonable, appropriate and flexible adjustment for students with a disability. We closely monitor data on suspensions and absence from school for evidence of over-representation of different groups and take action promptly to address concerns.

#### Addressing prejudice and prejudice-based bullying

The school challenges all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying, which stand in the way of fulfilling our commitment to inclusion and equality:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around race, religion or belief, for example anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, or against Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum

- prejudices around gender and sexual orientation, including homophobic and transphobic attitudes

There is guidance in the staff handbook on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with. We treat all bullying incidents equally seriously.

We keep a record of different prejudice-related incidents and provide a report to the governors about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how we dealt with them. We review this data termly and take action to reduce incidents.

### **What we are doing to advance equality of opportunity between different groups**

- We will deliver training to increase staff and governor understanding of protected characteristics.
- We strive to increase students' understanding of protected characteristics and equality and diversity issues through a broad and balanced curriculum and in particular through tutor time, and our RE, PSHE and Citizenship curricula.
- We know the needs of our school population very well and collect and analyse data in order to inform our planning and identify targets to achieve improvements.
- We have procedures, working in partnership with parents and carers, to identify children who have a disability through our pupil admissions meetings.
- We collect data and monitor progress and outcomes of different groups of students and use this data to support school improvement. We take action to close any gaps, for example, for those making slow progress in acquiring age-appropriate literacy and number skills.

We collect, analyse and publish data:

- on the school population by gender and ethnicity;
- on the % of students identified as having a special educational need and/or disability and by their principal need or disability;
- by year group – in terms of ethnicity, gender and proficiency in English;
- on inequalities of outcome and participation, related to ethnicity, gender and disability and proficiency in English

We publish an analysis of standards reached by different groups at the end of each key stage:

- White British
- FSM and non-FSM
- Bangladeshi Black African Congolese Somali Black Caribbean
- Free School Meals
- Disadvantaged more able students
- EAL
- All students with SEND and with an EHCP
- Looked after children

We also collect, analyse and use data in relation to attendance and exclusions of different groups. This data can be found in the Equality Data Analysis on the school's website. We also provide paper copies in the school office.

We avoid language that runs the risk of placing a ceiling on any student's achievement and we use a range of teaching strategies that ensures we meet the needs of all in our care, providing additional support to those at risk of underachieving.

We are alert and proactive about the potentially damaging impact of negative language in matters such as race, gender, disability and sexuality. In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between, for example:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

- people of different gender identities.

We ensure equality of access for all to a broad and balanced curriculum, removing barriers to participation where necessary.

We have implemented an Accessibility Plan 2019-2023 designed to increase the extent to which students with disability can participate in the curriculum; improve the physical environment and improve the availability of accessible information to disabled students.

### **Positive Action**

We will take positive and proportionate action to address the disadvantage faced by particular groups of students with particular protected characteristics, such as targeted support. The actions will be designed to meet the school's Equality Objectives.

### **What we are doing to foster good relations**

- We prepare our students for life in a diverse society and ensure that there are activities across the curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils.
- We teach about difference and diversity and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination through PSHE and citizenship and across the curriculum.
- We use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the school population and local community in terms of race, gender, sexual identity and disability, avoiding stereotyping.
- We promote a whole school ethos and values that challenge prejudice based discriminatory language, attitudes and behaviour.
- We provide opportunities for people to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures.
- We include the contribution of different cultures to world history and that promote positive images of people
- We provide opportunities for students to listen to a range of opinions and empathise with different experiences
- We promote positive messages about equality and diversity through displays, assemblies, visitors and whole school events.

### **Other ways we address equality issues**

- We maintain records of all training relating to Equalities
- Our monitoring records include evaluations of aspects of Equalities
- We keep minutes of meetings where equality issues are discussed
- We have a rolling programme for reviewing all of our school policies in relation to equalities and their impact on the progress, safety and well-being of those in our care.
- The implications for equalities of new policies and practices are considered before they are introduced

In order to ensure that the work we are doing on equalities meets the needs of the whole school community we:

- review relevant feedback from the annual parent questionnaire, parents' evening, governors' consultations at parents' meetings;
- secure and analyse responses from staff surveys, staff meetings and training events;
- review feedback and responses from the student groups, PSHE lessons, whole school surveys on students' attitudes to self and school;
- analyse issues raised in annual reviews or reviews of progress on Individual Education Plans/Pastoral Support Plans, mentoring and support;
- ensure that we secure responses and feedback at governing body meetings and from the governing body's working groups.

### **Equality considerations in decision-making**

The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made.

The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when a school trip or activity is being planned, the school considers whether the trip:

- Cuts across any religious holidays
- Is accessible to students with disabilities
- Has equivalent facilities for different gender identities.

### **Staff development and training**

We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

We expect all members of the school community and visitors to support our commitment to promoting equalities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act. We will provide training, guidance and information to enable them to do this.

#### Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented. A member of the governing body has a watching brief regarding the implementation of this policy.

Every governing body committee keeps aspects of the school's commitment to the Equality Duty under review, for example, in terms of standards, curriculum, admissions, exclusions, personnel issues and the school environment. Governors annually review the Equality Policy and evaluate the success of the school's Equalities Work taking account of quantitative evidence (e.g., data) and qualitative evidence (e.g., surveys)

#### Headteacher and Leadership Team

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

A senior member of staff has day-to-day responsibility for co-coordinating implementation of the policy and for monitoring outcomes.

#### Teaching and Support Staff

All teaching and support staff will:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- challenge prejudice and discrimination
- deal fairly and professionally with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the school's principles, for example, in providing materials that give positive images in terms of race, gender and disability
- maintain the highest expectations of success for all pupils
- support different groups of students in their class through differentiated planning and teaching, especially those who may (sometimes temporarily) find aspects of academic learning difficult
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

We will provide training and guidance on Equalities for all staff new to the school as part of the induction procedure. We will go through the principal expectations and duties of the Equality Act at a whole staff meeting at the start of the school year.

#### Visitors

All visitors to the school, including parents and carers are expected to support our commitment to equalities and comply with the duties set out in this policy. We will provide guidance and information in school newsletters to enable them to do this.

### **Key contacts**

Staff responsible for equalities: Mr L. Maynard

Lead governor: Ms C. Ricketts



### **Breaches of the policy**

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

### **Equal Opportunities for staff**

- This section deals with aspects of equal opportunities relating to staff. We are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment.
- All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and ability and in compliance with the law.
- We are also concerned to ensure wherever possible that the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.
- As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce. We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, pupils and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.
- We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

### **Disseminating the policy**

This Equality Policy along with the Equality Objectives and data is available:

- on the school website
- as paper copies in the school office
- in the staff handbook
- on display for visitors, including parents and carers
- as part of induction for new staff

We ensure that the whole school community knows about the policy, objectives and data through the school newsletter, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications. We publish on the school's website copies of relevant policies and guidance, including those on behaviour, anti-bullying and special educational needs.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school. The school will review this policy biennially and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

**Appendix I**  
**Equality information and objectives statement (Public Sector Equality Duty)**  
**Two-year equality objectives 2024 - 2026**

Item	Equality Objectives
1	<p>To ensure the early and accurate identification of individual students' needs. This will include the identification of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or any other additional needs such as EAL, medical, mental health, anger management or social care needs.</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> Early access to information regarding students that have Additional Educational Needs will facilitate the early planning and the early implementation of provision that is matched with the needs of identified students.</p>
2	<p>To closely monitor student progress and, in collaboration with specialist external services, to identify new and emerging needs through the schedule of annual Care Plan meetings, biannual SEND Review meetings and termly LAC Reviews.</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> Provision for vulnerable students is under constant review helping to embed good practice and bringing about enhanced provision where new and emerging needs are identified.</p>
3	<p>To track the progress and attendance of different groups with protected characteristics, as far as practicable, and to intervene as appropriate to further enhance the attendance of all students within the cohort to achieve a zero rate of suspensions and permanent exclusions for pupils within this category.</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> attendance and progress of different groups in line with students without protected characteristics. The school will monitor the effectiveness of the above provision in relation to attendance and exclusion annually.</p>
4	<p>To promote students' active participation in school life particularly in relation to trips, extracurricular activities and posts of student responsibility. To ensure that staff selecting students for posts of responsibility, organising trips and extra-curricular activities pay due regard to the inclusion of all students.</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> Participation rates in extracurricular activities and school trips and students in posts of responsibility matches that of students without protected characteristics.</p>
5	<p>To build on the excellent practice of the school so that the gaps in attainment for disadvantaged students close even further</p> <p><b>Success criteria:</b> gap in progress of disadvantaged students narrows further</p>
6	<p>To maintain a strong anti-bullying culture within the school community and to facilitate open and effective communication with students so that equality issues can be identified promptly and resolved effectively. In support of this the following will occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'School Vision' assemblies.</li> <li>• Letters to parents and students from the Headteacher.</li> <li>• The Headteacher's report to governors always includes bullying statistics.</li> <li>• Clear anti-bullying policy stated in the school student planner.</li> <li>• All staff and students will receive training in relation to forms and types of bullying and the impact of bullying on the individual. This training will be repeated for new members of staff and our new intake of students annually.</li> <li>• All students will complete termly bullying/equality surveys, which will be conducted in both a written format and via one-to-one interviews.</li> <li>• The School's SENDCO will coordinate the annual pupil/parent voice survey for students within the SEND cohort.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success criteria:</b> Incidents of bullying are low. Student feedback from student voice surveys indicate that students feel safe and are treated equally.</p>
7	<p>To ensure that the appointment of staff is in line with the equality legislation and that all reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the needs of all staff (e.g. religious observance)</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> Having a diverse and harmonious staff, meeting the needs of the school.</p>

**Appendix II**  
**Two Year Access Plan Objectives 2024 – 2026**

Item	Actions
1	<p><b>Improvements in access to the curriculum to ensure appropriate levels of training in school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek professional advice and provide INSET for staff as appropriate (e.g., as instances of autism, dyslexia, medical and behavioural problems arise)</li> <li>• As part of the School's Equality Plan, the School will further develop the annual programme of staff training/inset on disability issues.</li> <li>• Whole staff training will be provided annually in relation to medical protocols/care plans.</li> <li>• Our termly CPD courses will be inclusive of SEND themes.</li> <li>• St. Ignatius Centre designed to help students with behavioural and mental health difficulties learn to regulate themselves, continue learning and avoid exclusions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Success criteria</b> – progress of students with identified SEND</p>
2	<p><b>Physical improvements to increase access to education and associated services</b></p> <p>To consider and address access needs and make sure suitable improvements are in place and functioning properly</p> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b> Improved disability access was actively considered in the early planning of all premises development and its "fit for purpose" status is continually monitored.</p>
3	<p><b>To involve students / parents and colleagues with additional needs in planning provision</b></p> <p>To further develop forums for both staff and parents where issues relating to access and equality can be raised, including but not limited to annual care plan meetings and SEND reviews</p> <p><b>Success criteria:</b> attendance of parents and students at care plan &amp; SEND reviews. Parent and student responses to student voice surveys are positive and impact on planning.</p>
4	<p><b>To accommodate medical dietary needs</b></p> <p>To record individual dietary needs and to ensure that all food is clearly and unequivocally labelled.</p> <p><b>Success criteria:</b> absence of allergic reactions triggered by canteen food</p>
5	<p><b>To identify annual SEND priorities which will contribute towards the School Improvement Plan.</b></p> <p>Annual improvement priorities identified</p> <p><b>Success criteria:</b> The SEND Department reports annually on the implementation of the school's policy for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The effectiveness of support, the engagement of pupils with provision and the associated impact on outcomes for SEND pupils are reported and published on the school's website.</p>