



# Equalities Policy

Reviewed by Donna James

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Approved by Headteacher:

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## **Bristol Steiner School Equalities Policy**

### **1. Rationale**

Bristol Steiner School (BSS) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all and celebrating the diversity of the children, staff and parents served by Steiner schools. It is part of the School's ethos to respect and value each person as an individual and acknowledge the gifts and challenges that every human being offers. Accordingly, it is the intention of the School that all pupils are valued and respected as equals. As an inclusive school, BSS aims for all pupils to have the opportunity to access the unique Steiner education on offer. We do not accept any form of intolerance, and strive to make our School an environment in which all within our community are treated with dignity and respect. Individuals are valued and supported in reaching their full potential and stereotypes and intolerant views are challenged. In particular, the School rejects racism in all its forms, including any statements in Steiner's works that appear to be racist, or to support racism. The school is mindful that Steiner frequently described racist views as being anachronistic and antithetical to basic human values and dignity. We recognize our responsibility to challenge discrimination and to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that our School is welcoming and accessible to everyone, including those from Equalities Communities. BSS welcomes the opportunity to meet the requirements of the Equality Act and to take positive action to actively promote equality. We understand that certain factors affect the well-being of children and can impact on their learning and attainment.

Our Equalities policy is an essential part of our Safeguarding practice. BSS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults. We believe the welfare of the child is paramount and that no child should suffer harm of any form, either at home or at school. Everyone who works at or visits our School has the responsibility to make sure all our children are safe.

*For the purposes of this policy, 'staff' also includes agency staff, volunteers, and students working in our Schools, and 'parents' includes carers and legal guardians – unless this is clarified further within the text.*

### **2. Aims**

BSS aims to:

- embed the principles of the Equality Act as far as possible in all areas of the curriculum and the life of the School;
- provide a secure and accessible environment in which all our children can flourish;
- welcome diversity and consider and value all contributions;
- ensure behaviour is of the highest standard;
- welcome diversity and give children opportunities to positively explore difference;
- ensure that children learn from example to respect the feelings and beliefs of others;
- be fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children;
- challenge and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- foster good relations within our School community in order that everyone can enjoy living, learning and working together; and
- ensure that all children have the equal right to be safeguarded in our School.

Respect and a warm welcome will be given to all children, families and visitors. Children, parents, staff and Trustees will work together to make BSS a good place to be.

### **3. Definitions**

The Equalities Act 2010 requires our School not to discriminate against a child or their family, or prevent entry to our School, on the basis of a protected characteristic as defined by the Act. These protected Characteristics are:

- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Age
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

### **4. Implementation**

This policy is the responsibility of everyone who works at, volunteers for or visits BSS. The Headteacher and the Senior Management Team (SMT) will ensure that arrangements will be made to bring this policy to the notice of all staff (including new, temporary, and part-time employees), agency and other contract staff, volunteers, visitors and students during Induction and throughout their time at the School so that they fulfill their duties to co-operate with this policy. The Headteacher and SMT will ensure that all staff are given appropriate training and support to meet these responsibilities. They should monitor closely and treat all incidents of unfair treatment and any incidents of bullying or discrimination, including racist incidents, with due seriousness. If necessary, Ofsted will be informed. All staff have a responsibility to keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work and must support the ethos of the School through their actions. They should undertake all their work activities mindful of equalities issues, including planning, assessment and individual support for children and groups of children. They should demonstrate an awareness of specific individual needs and promote respect for diversity and know how to respond to and deal with any prejudice-related incidents which occur. The Trustees are responsible for ensuring the School complies with legislation, and that the Equalities policy, practice and related procedures and any action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed and monitored. This policy and procedure will apply in all contexts, including school activities taking place offsite. BSS delivers services at various venues, and this policy will apply in all these contexts. BSS expects services delivered by partner organisations to have safeguarding procedures in place. This policy should appear on the School website.

### **5. Other policies**

This policy works in conjunction with the following School related policies and procedures:

1. *Admissions*
2. *Anti-bullying*
3. *Behaviour*
4. *Code of conduct (staff)*
5. *Complaints/Concerns/Grievance*
6. *Curriculum*
7. *eSafety*

8. *Health and Safety*
9. *Parent Handbook*
10. *Parent Prospectus*
11. *Recruitment and selection*
12. *Safeguarding and Child Protection*
13. *Staffing*
14. *SEN, disability, SEND, and Inclusion*
15. *Whistleblowing*

## **6. Monitoring and Review**

BSS will seek to continually improve all its related safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines. BSS will review this policy on a regular basis to confirm that content and approach is still appropriate. The review will take place whenever there are significant changes and not later than 12 months from the previous review date.

## **7. Law and Guidance**

This Equalities policy has been developed in response to the Equality Act 2010. This Act simplifies, strengthens and harmonises the current legislation to provide Britain with a discrimination law that protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

## **8. Admissions**

- BSS is open to all members of the community.
- We will reflect the diversity of our society in our publicity and promotional materials.
- We will provide information in clear, concise language, whether in spoken or written form.
- We will encourage all parents to be aware of our Equalities policy.
- We will not discriminate against a child or their family, or prevent entry to our School, on the basis of a protected characteristic as defined by the Equalities Act 2010. We do not discriminate against a child with a disability or refuse a child entry to our School for reasons relating to disability.
- We will strive to ensure that people with impairments can participate successfully in the services offered by the School and in the curriculum offered.
- We will take action against any discriminatory behaviour by staff or parents whether by:
  - direct discrimination: someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic e.g. preventing families of some racial groups from using our services;
  - indirect discrimination: someone is affected unfavourably by a general policy e.g. children must only speak English in the School;
  - association: discriminating against someone who is associated with a person with a protected characteristic e.g. behaving unfavourably to someone who is married to a person from a different cultural background; or
  - perception: discrimination on the basis that it is thought someone has a protected characteristic e.g. assuming someone is gay because of their mannerisms or how they speak.

Displaying of openly discriminatory and possibly offensive materials, discriminatory remarks, name calling or threatening behaviour are unacceptable on or around the premises and will be challenged in the strongest manner.

## 9. Recruitment and Selection

- Posts are advertised and all applicants are judged against explicit and fair criteria.
- Applicants are welcome from all backgrounds and posts are open to all.
- The applicant who best meets the criteria is offered the post, subject to references and checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service. BSS will appoint, train and develop staff members on the basis of merit and ability.
- This ensures fairness in the selection process.
- We will monitor our application process to ensure that it is fair and accessible.

## 10. Training

BSS will seek out training opportunities for staff to enable them to develop anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices, which enable all children to flourish. We will ensure that relevant staff are confident and fully trained in administering medicines and carrying out care procedures when these are required. We will review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our policy for promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusion.

## 11. Curriculum

The curriculum offered in the School encourages children to develop positive attitudes about themselves as well as to people who are different from themselves. It encourages children to empathise with others and to begin to develop the skills of critical thinking. We will endeavour to make our environment as accessible as possible for children, parents, all visitors and service users. If access to the School is found to treat disabled children or adults less favourably then we make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of disabled children and adults. We will:

- make children feel valued and good about themselves and others;
- ensure that children have equality of access to learning;
- continue to audit access to establish if the School building is accessible to all children;
- make adjustments to the environment and resources to accommodate a wide range of learning, physical and sensory impairments;
- make appropriate provision within the curriculum to ensure each child receives the widest possible opportunity to develop their skills and abilities, e.g. recognising the different learning styles of girls and boys;
- provide resources that positively reflect both the diversity of the School, local community and wider society as a whole.
- avoid stereotypes or derogatory images in the selection of books or other visual materials;
- celebrate a wide range of festivals;
- create an environment of mutual respect and tolerance;
- differentiate the curriculum to meet children's additional or different educational needs;
- ensure that children learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning;
- ensure that children speaking languages other than English are supported in the maintenance and development of their home languages.
- ensure that staff are aware of the vulnerable groups within School and are committed to 'closing gaps' through assessment, teaching and learning.

## 12. English as an additional language

BSS has children who attend the school whose mother tongue is not English. The School aims for all pupils to be able to access the curriculum as soon and as effectively as possible, in parallel with gaining language skills useful in both social and academic life. It is important to make a clear

distinction between EAL pupils and those with special educational needs (SEN). If a pupil learning English as an additional language is discovered to have SEN through assessment of their learning achievements, teachers and specialist language staff should work closely with an SEN coordinator to enable the pupil to reach their full language potential. On the other hand, EAL needs should not prevent gifted and talented pupils from being recognised as such. The planning involved in bringing pupils up to speed with curriculum subjects must take into account factors such as:

- age;
- previous experience of schooling and curriculum content;
- knowledge of other languages; and
- levels of literacy in their first or other languages.

It is important for all teachers to consider the following factors:

- recognising the child's mother tongue, and making it clear that speaking in their home;
- language can be a positive part of the learning process;
- giving newly arrived young children time to absorb English by allowing them a 'silent period';
- which will usually pass once their self-confidence increases;
- boosting the child's self-esteem;
- viewing the cultural differences brought by the pupil to the class as a bonus, and using this in the teaching process;
- having high expectations; expecting pupils to contribute with more than one-word answers;
- using teaching strategies that do not allow any racist comments or jokes; and
- allowing support from bilingual parents, volunteers or other professionals to develop children's understanding and vocabulary.

Strategies to bring out pupils' language potential can include:

- using culturally relevant resources and learning materials;
- promoting thinking and taking in first languages to support understanding; and
- grouping EAL learners who share the same home language.

#### **14. Valuing diversity in families**

BSS welcomes the diversity of family lifestyles and we will work with all families using our School. We will encourage children to contribute stories of their everyday life to the School and encourage mothers, fathers and other carers to take part in the life of the School and to contribute fully. For families who speak languages in addition to English, we will develop means to ensure their full inclusion. We will take positive action to encourage disadvantaged and under-represented groups to use the School. We will ensure that the dietary requirements of children that arise from their medical, religious or cultural needs are met and help children and families to learn about a range of food, cultural approaches to mealtimes and eating, and to respect the differences among them.

#### **15. Parents**

BSS will host regular opportunities for parents to become involved in the decision making process of the School. We will positively encourage fathers to be involved in the School. We will provide information about meetings in a variety of ways, e.g. written, verbal and in translation, to ensure that all parents have information about and access to the meetings.

#### **16. Safeguarding**

BSS is fully committed to ensuring that all children have an equal right to be safeguarded. When recognising child abuse, it is important that professionals should respect different family patterns

and lifestyles that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups. The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that ‘family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins and other characteristics should be respected.’ But at the same time our School is clear that child abuse cannot be condoned for religious or cultural reasons. We are mindful that the Equality Act 2010 ‘puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular needs.’ Current statutory guidance says clearly that ‘every assessment should reflect the **unique characteristics** of the child within their family and community context.’ (Source: ‘Working together to Safeguard Children DES: HMO 2015)

### **17.Complaints**

The BSS Complaints procedure is available to any employee, pupil or prospective pupil and parent who believes that they may have been unfairly discriminated against. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Discriminatory conduct, harassment or victimisation will be treated as gross misconduct.