

# SPRINGBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL SINGLE EQUALITY POLICY

## Springbank Primary School



### Character Education Values

Courtesy-Forgiveness-Determination-Self-Discipline-Gratitude-Honesty

Our whole school vision is:

Springbank Primary is a place where all of our children and staff will have the opportunity to excel. Everyone will be safe, happy and cared for. Our curriculum and values will inspire everyone in the school family to be motivated and curious learners and offer core skills, knowledge and enrichment to enable all to gain the foundations for a quality future and a love for life-long learning.

In all we do we remember our school motto:

**Caring-Happy-Healthy-Sporty-Scientific**

### School Values

Sportsmanship-Tolerance- Appreciation- Respect-Friendship-Integrity-Sensitivity-Helpfulness

## Single Equality Policy

January 2021



Policy Lead: Julie Vaccari



Link Governor: Bill Howard

### Finance Monitoring Committee

Springbank Primary School is committed to equal opportunities for all. It is our aim that every policy is written to have a positive impact on every child/all children irrespective of race; religion; gender; sexual orientation or age.

Springbank = success for all

There is a key that unlocks every child's learning, our job is to find that key.

Every staff member and governor must take the responsibility and accountability to ensure the procedures within this policy are delivered and implemented as per Springbank School Policy.

# SPRINGBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL SINGLE EQUALITY POLICY

At Springbank Primary we understand that:

- The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law. It simplifies the law and it extends protection from discrimination in some areas.
- Schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
- The exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools being the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single sex schools and schools of a religious character.

## **Protection in schools**

Protection against discrimination is extended to pupils who are pregnant or have recently given birth, or who are undergoing gender reassignment.

## **Health related questions for job applicants**

We know it is unlawful for employers to ask health-related questions of applicants before job offer, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work. This means that we will no longer, as a matter of course, require job applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire as part of the initial application procedure. There are potential implications in relation to establishing teachers' fitness and ability to teach (as required by the Health Standards (England) Regulations 2003). But to ensure we are complying with both the Health Standards Regulations and Section 60 of the Equality Act. We will ask necessary health questions *after* the job offer. Any health-related questions however will be targeted and relevant to the job applied for.

## **Positive Action**

Positive Action provisions allow us to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantage experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. We know such measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim. We take in to consideration that previously a school providing - for example - special catch-up classes for Roma children or a project to engage specifically with alienated Asian boys, *might* have been discriminating unlawfully by excluding children who didn't belong to these groups.

## **Victimisation**

It is now unlawful to victimise a child for anything done in relation to the Act by their parent or sibling.

## **Auxiliary aids**

However, the Act does extend the reasonable adjustment duty to require us to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils.

## **Equality duties**

We understand that the three previous general and specific equality duties on schools (race, disability and gender) to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of

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opportunity have been combined into a less bureaucratic and more outcome-focused duty covering an expanded number of protected characteristics.

## **Overview of the Act**

### **At Springbank Primary we take into account that:**

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 replaced nine major Acts of Parliament and almost a hundred sets of regulations which had been introduced over several decades. It provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by getting rid of anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time, and it extends protection against discrimination in certain areas.

1.2 We acknowledge that the introduction of the public sector equality duty has replaced the three separate duties on race, disability and gender and that the overall effect of the Act will be to reduce a certain amount of bureaucracy and so should be less burdensome and more effective.

### **We know that:**

1.4 In England and Wales the Act applies to all maintained and independent schools, including Academies, and maintained and non-maintained special schools.

1.5 The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- in relation to admissions,
- in the way it provides education for pupils,
- in the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service, or
- by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

1.6 The "responsible body" is the governing body or the Local Authority for maintained schools in England and Wales. In practice, any persons acting on behalf of the responsible body - including employees of the school - are liable for their own discriminatory actions, and the responsible body is also liable unless it can show that it has taken all reasonable steps to stop the individual from doing the discriminatory action or from doing anything of that kind.

1.7 We acknowledge the act deals with the way in which schools treat their pupils and prospective pupils: the relationship between one pupil and another is not within its scope. It does not therefore bear directly on such issues as racist or homophobic bullying by pupils. However, if a school treats bullying which relates to a protected ground less seriously than other forms of bullying - for example dismissing complaints of homophobic bullying or failing to protect a transgender pupil against bullying by classmates - then it may be guilty of unlawful discrimination.

1.8 We understand that the school's liability not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left the school, but will apply to subsequent actions connected to the previous relationship between school and pupil, such as the provision of references on former pupils or access to "old pupils" communications and activities.

### **Protected characteristics**

**We fully take into consideration that:**

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1.9 It is unlawful for our school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of their:

- sex
- race
- disability
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity

## **Association**

### **We also recognise that:**

1.10 It is unlawful to discriminate because of the sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment of another person with whom the pupil is associated. So, for example, a school must not discriminate by refusing to admit a pupil because his/her parents are gay men or lesbians. It would be race discrimination to treat a white pupil less favourably because she has a black boyfriend.

## **Perception**

1.11 It is also unlawful to discriminate because of a characteristic which you think a person has, even if you are mistaken. So a teacher who consistently picks on a pupil for being gay will be discriminating because of sexual orientation whether or not the pupil is in fact gay.

### **We know that:**

1.12 The Act extends protection against discrimination on grounds of pregnancy or maternity to pupils, so it will be unlawful - as well as against education policy - for a school to treat a pupil unfavourably because she is pregnant or a new mother.

1.13 Protection for transgender pupils against gender reassignment discrimination is also included in this Act.

1.14 We believe the term "protected characteristics" is used as a convenient way to refer to the personal characteristics to which the law applies.

1.15 A person's age is also a protected characteristic in relation to employment and the Act extends this (except for children) to the provision of goods and services, but age as a protected characteristic does not apply to pupils in schools. Schools therefore remain free to admit and organise children in age groups and to treat pupils in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development without risk of legal challenge, even in the case of pupils over the age of 18.

## **Unlawful behaviour**

### **We take heed of the fact that:**

1.16 The Act defines four kinds of unlawful behaviour - direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment and victimisation.

1.17 Direct discrimination occurs when one person treats another less favourably, because of a protected characteristic, than they treat - or would treat - other people.

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This describes the most clear-cut and obvious examples of discrimination – for example if a school were to refuse to let a pupil be a prefect because she is a lesbian.

1.18 Indirect discrimination occurs when a “provision, criterion or practice” is applied generally but has the effect of putting people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to people without that characteristic. An example might be holding a parents’ meeting on a Friday evening, which could make it difficult for observant Jewish parents to attend. It is a defence against a claim of indirect discrimination if it can be shown to be “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”. This means both that the reason for the rule or practice is legitimate, and that it could not reasonably be achieved in a different way which did not discriminate.

1.19 Harassment has a specific legal definition in the Act - it is “unwanted conduct, related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person”. This covers unpleasant and bullying behaviour, but potentially extends also to actions which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, cause offence to a person because of a protected characteristic.

1.20 We know where schools are concerned, the offence of harassment as defined in this way in the Act applies only to harassment because of disability, race, sex or pregnancy and maternity, and not to religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. It is very important to recognise that this does not mean we are free to bully or harass the pupils on these other grounds - to do so would still be unlawful as well as unacceptable. Any case against the school would be on grounds of direct discrimination rather than harassment.

1.21 Thus, if a teacher belittles a pupil and holds her up to ridicule in class because of a disability she has, this could lead to a court case alleging unlawful harassment. The same unacceptable treatment directed at a lesbian pupil, or based on a pupil’s religion, could lead to a case claiming direct discrimination. The practical consequences for the school, and the penalties, would be no different.

1.22 Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than they otherwise would have been because of something they have done (“a protected act”) in connection with the Act. A protected act might involve, for example, making an allegation of discrimination or bringing a case under the Act, or supporting another person’s complaint by giving evidence or information, but it includes anything that is done under or in connection with the Act. Even if what a person did or said was incorrect or misconceived, for example based on a misunderstanding of the situation or of what the law provides, they are protected against retaliation unless they were acting in bad faith. The reason for this is to ensure that people are not afraid to raise genuine concerns about discrimination because of fear of retaliation.

1.23 We know that as well as it being unlawful to victimise a person who does a protected act, a child must not be victimised because of something done by their parent or a sibling in relation to the Act. This means that a child must not be made to suffer in any way because, for example, her mother has made a complaint of sex discrimination against the school, or her brother has claimed that a teacher is bullying him because he is gay, whether or not the mother or brother was acting in good faith.

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1.24 If a pupil has himself or herself done a protected act - such as making a complaint of discrimination against a teacher - then the child's own good faith will be relevant. For example, if the parent's complaint is based on information from her son and the son was deliberately lying, it is not victimisation for the school to punish him in the same way as it might do any other dishonest pupil. Unless it can be clear that the mother was also acting in bad faith (for example that she knew her son was lying) it would still be unlawful to victimise her for pursuing the complaint.

## **Special provisions for disability**

### **We understand:**

1.25 The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act in a number of ways. In particular, it works in only one direction - that is to say, it protects disabled people but not people who are not disabled. This means that schools are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so, by making reasonable adjustments to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities. The definition of what constitutes discrimination is more complex. Provision for disabled pupils is closely connected with the regime for children with Special Educational Needs.

## **Definition of parents**

1.26 Any reference to a parent in the Act, we understand, is a wide reference (as in education law generally) not only to a pupil's birth parents but to adoptive, step and foster parents, or other persons who have parental responsibility for, or who have care of, a pupil.

## **Further Information**

### **We know:**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has developed detailed technical guidance for schools available on their website.

## **General exceptions**

**Although we are not a single sex school or one with a religious character we recognise that:**

2.1 There are exceptions which apply to schools with a religious character and single sex schools.

### **Single sex schools**

2.2 Single sex schools are able to refuse to admit pupils of the opposite sex. The exception also permits a single sex school to admit a small number of pupils from the opposite sex on an exceptional basis or in relation to particular courses or classes only. If a single sex school has such pupils, limiting them to particular courses or classes is not discrimination. However, other forms of sex discrimination by the school against its opposite-sex pupils would still be unlawful. This means that (for example):

- A school which admits only boys is not discriminating unlawfully against girls.
- A boys' school which admits some girls to the Sixth Form, or which lets girls attend for a particular GCSE course not offered at their own school, is still regarded as a single-sex school.

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- A girls' school which permits a pupil who is undergoing gender reassignment to remain after they adopt a male gender role would not lose its single-sex status. However,
- A boys' school which admits girls to the Sixth Form but refuses to let them use the same cafeteria or go on the same visits as other Sixth Form pupils *would be* discriminating unlawfully against them.
- A boys' school which admits girls to A-level science classes is not discriminating unlawfully if it refuses to admit them to A-level media studies or maths classes.

## **Schools with a religious character**

2.3 Schools with a religious character (commonly known as faith schools) 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.

### **Admissions**

2.4 Schools with a religious character may give priority in admissions to members of their own religion. The Admissions Code provides that this may only be done when a school is oversubscribed – schools subject to the Code are not permitted to refuse admission to pupils not of their faith if they have unfilled places.

- For example, a Muslim school may lawfully give priority to Muslim pupils when choosing between applicants for admission. However, the Admissions Code will not allow it to refuse to accept pupils of another or no religion unless it is oversubscribed.

The exception is not in fact confined to preferring children of the school's own faith. It would, for example, allow a Church of England school to allocate some places to children from Hindu or Muslim families if it wanted to ensure a mixed intake reflecting the diversity of the local population. It would not, however, allow the school to base this selection on ethnic background rather than faith.

### **Benefits facilities and services**

2.5 In addition to the admissions exception, schools with a religious character also have exceptions for how they provide education to pupils and in the way they allow access to other aspects of school life which are not necessarily part of the curriculum. For example:

- A Jewish school which provides spiritual instruction or pastoral care from a rabbi is not discriminating unlawfully by not making equivalent provision for pupils from other religious faiths.
- A Church of England school which organises visits for pupils to sites of particular interest to its own faith, such as a cathedral, is not discriminating unlawfully by not arranging trips to sites of significance to the faiths of other pupils.
- A child of a different faith could not claim, for example, that they were being treated less favourably because objects symbolic of a school's faith, such as the Bible, were given a special status in the school.

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## **What is not permissible:**

2.6 These exceptions allow such schools to conduct themselves in a way which is compatible with their religious ethos. But 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. For example, it would be unlawful for a Catholic school to treat a pupil less favourably because he rejected the Catholic faith and declared himself to be a Jehovah's Witness or an atheist.

2.7 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, for example a school with a religious character would be acting unlawfully if it refused to admit a child because he or she was gay - or their parents were.

## **Curriculum**

### **At Springbank Primary we know and understand that:**

2.8 The content of the school curriculum has never been caught by discrimination law, and this Act now states explicitly that it is excluded. However the way in which a school provides education - the delivery of the curriculum - is explicitly included.

2.9 Excluding the content of the curriculum ensures that schools are free to include a full range of issues, ideas and materials in their syllabus, and to expose pupils to thoughts and ideas of all kinds, however challenging or controversial, without fear of legal challenge based on a protected characteristic. But schools will need to ensure that the way in which issues are taught does not subject individual pupils to discrimination.

2.10 Some examples can best explain the distinction between content and delivery of the curriculum as the Act applies:

- A boy complains that it is sex discrimination for him to be required to do a module on feminist thought.
- A girl complains that putting *The Taming of the Shrew* on the syllabus is discriminatory; or a Jewish pupil objects to having to study *The Merchant of Venice*.
- A fundamentalist Christian objects to the teaching of evolution in science lessons unbalanced by the teaching of "intelligent design".
- A school does a project to mark Gay Pride Week. A heterosexual pupil claims that he finds this embarrassing and that it discriminates against him on grounds of his sexual orientation; a Christian or a Muslim pupil objects to it on religious grounds.
- A Muslim pupil objects to the works of Salman Rushdie being included on a reading list.

2.11 All of the above are examples of complaints against the content of the curriculum, and none of them would give rise to a valid complaint under the Act.

2.12 However, valid complaints that the curriculum is being delivered in a discriminatory way might well arise in situations such as the following:

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- A teacher uses the fact that 'The Taming of the Shrew' is a set book to make derogatory generalisations about the inferiority of women, in a way which makes the girls in the class feel belittled. Or, in teaching 'The Merchant of Venice', he encourages the class to laugh at a Jewish pupil.
- In class discussions, black pupils are never called on and the teacher makes it clear that she is not interested in their views.
- Girls are not allowed to do Design Technology or boys are discouraged from doing food technology. This is not intrinsic to the curriculum itself but to the way in which education is made available to pupils.
- The girls' cricket team are not allowed equal access to the cricket nets, or the boys' hockey team is given far better resources than the girls' team. This would be less favourable delivery of education rather than to do with the sports curriculum.

## **Acts of worship**

### **We fully acknowledge that:**

2.13 There is a general exception, which applies to all schools, to the religion or belief provisions which allows all schools to have acts of worship or other forms of collective religious observance. This means the daily act of collective worship, which for maintained schools is mandatory and should be of a broadly Christian nature, is not covered by the religion or belief provisions. The exception means that schools will not be acting unlawfully if they do not provide an equivalent act of worship for other faiths.

2.14 Schools are also free to celebrate religious festivals and could not be claimed to be discriminating against children of other faiths if, for example, they put on a nativity play at Christmas or hold a celebration to mark other religious festivals such as Diwali or Eid.

## **Uniforms**

### **We recognise:**

2.15 The Equality Act does not deal specifically with school uniform or other aspects of appearance such as hair colour and style, and the wearing of jewellery and make-up, but the general requirement not to discriminate in the treatment of pupils applies here as in relation to other aspects of school policy. The governing body of Springbank Primary has agreed the school uniform and other rules relating to appearance. This flows from the duties placed upon the governing body by statute to manage the school.

2.16 Long-standing guidance makes it clear that schools must have regard to their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 (it is here rather than in relation to equality law that most case law has been determined to date) as well as under equality law, and that they need to be careful that blanket uniform policies do not discriminate because of race, religion or belief, gender, disability, gender reassignment or sexual orientation. Consequently it will be up to Springbank Primary School to consider the implications our uniform requirements have on our pupils.

2.17 We have a gender neutral uniform and recognise it to be unlawful if the uniform is considerably more expensive for girls than for boys. Our whole neutral uniform will

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meet the needs of any pupil who chooses to undergo gender reassignment. We recognise it may also be discrimination because of disability if, for example, a child who has a skin condition which means they cannot wear nylon is not allowed to wear cotton trousers as part of the uniform.

## **We understand:**

2.18 There are potential issues around school uniform policies and religion and belief. We are sensitive to the needs of different cultures, races and religions and act reasonably in accommodating these needs, without compromising important school policies, such as school safety or discipline. It is well established that it would be race discrimination to refuse to let a Sikh child wear a turban because of a school policy requiring that caps be worn, but we acknowledge that legal judgments have not supported the absolute right of people of faith to wear garments or jewellery to indicate faith.

## **Bullying**

### **We fully recognise that:**

2.19 The issue of bullying motivated by prejudice is a particularly sensitive issue. Although the relationship between one pupil and another is not within the scope of the Act we ensure that all forms of prejudice-motivated bullying are taken seriously and dealt with equally and firmly.

### **We know that:**

2.20 The Department for Education has published specific guidance on bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying and bullying related to sexual orientation, transgender, disability, race and religion. This is available on GOV.UK.

The Gender Identity Research and Education Society have also published 'Guidance on Combating Transphobic Bullying in Schools'.

Stonewall have a wealth of material on homophobic bullying on their website. All these resources will be accessed.

## **Special issues for some protected characteristics**

### **Gender reassignment**

#### **We know that:**

3.1 Protection from discrimination because of gender reassignment in schools is new for pupils in the Equality Act, although school staff are already protected. This means that for the first time it will be unlawful for us to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment and that we will have to factor in gender reassignment when considering their obligations under the Equality Duty.

3.2 Gender reassignment is defined in the Equality Act as applying to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone or is proposing to undergo a process (or part of a process) of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. This definition means that in order to be protected under the Act, a pupil will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender, or proposing to do so.

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We use a glossary of terminology related to the transgender field which can be found on the Gender Identity Research and Education Society website.

## **We understand:**

3.3 The protection against discrimination because of gender reassignment now matches the protection because of sexual orientation in schools. That is protection from direct and indirect discrimination and victimisation, which includes discrimination based on perception and on association. We will make sure that all gender variant pupils, or the children of transgender parents, are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. We will check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of such pupils. For example, it would be unlawful discrimination for a teacher to single out a pupil undergoing gender reassignment and embarrass him in front of the class because of this characteristic.

## **We understand:**

3.4 It is relatively rare for pupils - particularly very young pupils - to want to undergo gender reassignment, but when a pupil does so, a number of issues will arise which will need to be sensitively handled. However we recognise there is evidence that the number of such cases is increasing and we should aim to address any issues early on and in a proactive way. We know further guidance is available from the GIRES website - In addition, a partnership of bodies in Cornwall have produced a useful guidance document for schools and families.

## **Race**

### **We are aware that:**

3.5 The definition of race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

3.6 We will make sure that pupils of all races are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. We will check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of such pupils. For example, it would be unlawful for a selective school to impose a higher standard for admission to applicants from an ethnic minority background, or for a school to impose stricter disciplinary penalties on African Caribbean boys than they do in similar circumstances to children from other backgrounds.

### **Segregating pupils by race or ethnicity**

#### **We acknowledge:**

3.7 Segregation of pupils by race is always direct discrimination. It would thus be unlawful for a school to put children into sets, or into different sports in PE classes, according to their ethnicity. This stipulation in the Act is to make it clear that claims that segregated treatment is "separate but equal" cannot be sustained where race is concerned. It does not mean that we cannot take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting children of one racial or ethnic group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

## **Race Equality Duty**

### **We know:**

3.8 Schools previously had a statutory duty which required them to take proactive steps to tackle racial discrimination, and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations. We now understand that under the Equality Act, this has been replaced by the general equality duty and its specific duties.

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## **Religion or belief**

### **We know that:**

3.9 The Equality Act defines "religion" as being any religion, and "belief" as any religious or philosophical belief. A lack of religion or a lack of belief are also protected characteristics. These definitions are fairly broad and the concepts of religion and belief therefore must be construed in accordance with existing case law. This means that to benefit from protection under the Act, a religion or belief must have a clear structure and belief system, and should have a certain level of cogency, seriousness and cohesion, and not be incompatible with human dignity.

3.10 "Religion" will include for example all the major faith groups and "belief" will include non-religious worldviews such as humanism. Religion will also include denominations or sects within a religion, such as Catholicism or Protestantism within Christianity. It is not however intended to include political beliefs such as Communism or support for any particular political party.

3.11 Lack of religion or belief is also included in the definition of "religion or belief". This means it will be unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds that they do not adhere, or sufficiently adhere, to a particular religion or belief (even one shared by the discriminator), or indeed any religion or belief at all - such as, for example, an atheist.

3.12 Discrimination because of religion or belief means treating a person less favourably than another person is or would be treated, because of their religion or belief, or the religion or belief they are perceived to have, their lack of religion or belief, or the religion or belief, or lack of it, of someone else with whom they are associated.

3.13 The Equality Act makes it clear that unlawful religious discrimination can include discrimination against another person of the same religion or belief as the discriminator. This is to ensure that any potential discrimination between, e.g. Orthodox and Reform Jews, or Shia and Sunni Muslims, would also be unlawful. So if a Muslim pupil is not chosen for a part in a school play because it is thought to be inappropriate for a girl of that faith, that will be discrimination even if the decision was taken by a Muslim teacher. Nor could a Muslim teacher choose one Muslim pupil over another for a part in the play because he thinks the chosen pupil is a more observant member of his faith and should be rewarded.

### **We recognise:**

3.14 The definition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief does not address discrimination on any other ground (such as race, sex or sexual orientation). The Act does not allow a teacher to discriminate against a pupil because of his own personal religious views about homosexuality or the role of women for example.

## **Sex/gender**

3.15 We make sure that pupils of one sex are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to other pupils. We check that there are no

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practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of boys or girls. For example, it would be unlawful for a school to require girls to learn needlework while giving boys the choice between needlework and woodwork classes.

## **Gender Equality Duty**

### **We understand:**

3.16 Schools previously had a statutory duty to promote gender equality and have a gender equality scheme in place. We know under the Equality Act, this has been replaced by the general equality duty and the specific duties.

### **Single sex classes**

#### **We know that:**

3.17 Whilst there is no express exemption in the same way that there is for same sex schools, it is not necessarily unlawful to have some single sex classes in a mixed school, provided that this does not give children in such classes an unfair advantage or disadvantage when compared to children of the other sex in other classes. For example, it would be lawful to teach sex education to single-sex classes, as long as the classes were provided to both boys and girls, but unlawful to provide intervention classes just for boys who needed help with reading without doing the same for girls in a similar position. However, a positive action initiative specifically to help boys in such a position would not necessarily be unlawful but the school would need to be able to show that this was a proportionate way of dealing with a specific disadvantage experienced by boys and connected to their gender. It would not be proportionate simply to refuse help to girls with reading difficulties in order to help boys as a group catch up with the higher average attainment of girls. Pupils undergoing gender reassignment should be allowed to attend the single sex class that accords with the gender role in which they identify.

## **Single sex sport**

### **We acknowledge that:**

3.18 Although the Equality Act forbids discrimination in access to benefits, facilities and services; the Act does contain an exception which permits single sex sports. It applies to participation in any sport or game, or other activity of a competitive nature, where the physical strength, stamina or physique of the average woman (or girl) would put her at a disadvantage in competition with the average man (or boy). But while this exception might permit a mixed school to have a boys only football team, the school would still have to allow girls equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities. The judgment on whether girls would be at a physical disadvantage needs to take into account the particular group in question, so it is much less likely to justify segregated sports for younger children. Where separate teams exist, it would be unlawful discrimination for a school to treat one group less favourably - for example by providing the boys' hockey or cricket team with much better resources than the girls'.

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## **Pregnancy and maternity**

### **We recognise:**

3.19 Protection for pupils from discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity in schools is covered in the Equality Act. This means it is unlawful for schools to treat a pupil less favourably because she becomes pregnant or has recently had a baby, or because she is breastfeeding. We will also factor in pregnancy and maternity when considering our obligations under the Equality Duty. We know we cannot rule this out even though we are a primary school.

## **Sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership**

3.20 We need to make sure that all gay, lesbian or bi-sexual pupils, staff or the children of gay, lesbian or bi-sexual parents, are not singled out for different and less favourable treatment from that given to others. We will check that there are no practices which could result in unfair, less favourable treatment of such pupils. For example, it would be unlawful for a school to refuse to let a gay pupil become a pupil leader because of his sexual orientation.

3.21 We understand that no school, or individual teacher, is under a duty to support, promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples. Teaching will be based on facts and should enable pupils to develop an understanding of how the law applies to different relationships. Teachers will have regard to statutory guidance on sex and relationship education, and to meet duties under equality and human rights law.

## **Sexual orientation and religion or belief**

### **We realise:**

3.22 There is a relationship between protection because of sexual orientation and protection of religious freedom.

3.23 We recognise that many people's views on sexual orientation/sexual activity are themselves grounded in religious belief. Some schools with a religious character may have concerns that they may be prevented from teaching in line with their religious ethos. Teachers have expressed concerns that they may be subject to legal action if they do not voice positive views on same sex relationships, whether or not this view accords with their faith. There are also concerns that schools with a religious character may teach and act in ways unacceptable to lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and parents when same sex relationships are discussed because there are no express provisions to prevent this occurring.

### **However we know:**

3.24 Schools with a religious character, like all schools, have a responsibility for the welfare of the children in their care and to adhere to curriculum guidance. It is not the intention of the Equality Act to undermine their position as long as they continue to uphold their responsibilities in these areas. If their beliefs are explained in an appropriate way in an educational context that takes into account existing guidance on

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the delivery of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and Religious Education (RE), then schools should not be acting unlawfully.

## **We realise:**

3.25 However, if a school conveyed its belief in a way that involved haranguing, harassing or berating a particular pupil or group of pupils then this would be unacceptable in any circumstances and is likely to constitute unlawful discrimination.

3.26 Where individual teachers are concerned, having a view about something does not amount to discrimination. So it should not be unlawful for a teacher in any school to express personal views on sexual orientation provided that it is done in an appropriate manner and context (for example when responding to questions from pupils, or in an RE or Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) lesson). However, it should be remembered that school teachers are in a very influential position and their actions and responsibilities are bound by much wider duties than this legislation. A teacher's ability to express his or her views should not extend to allowing them to discriminate against others.

## **Disability**

4.1 We recognise all of the disability provisions in this Act are different from those for other protected characteristics in a number of ways.

4.2 The overriding principle of equality legislation is generally one of equal treatment - i.e. that you must treat a black person no less well than a white person, or a man as favourably as a woman. However, we know the provisions relating to disability discrimination are different in that we may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favourably than a person who is not disabled and may have to make changes to our practices to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that a disabled person can benefit from what you offer to the same extent that a person without that disability can. So in our school setting the general principle is:

We treat male and female, black and white, gay and straight pupils equally - but we may be required to treat disabled pupils differently. We note that discrimination is also defined rather differently in relation to disability.

## **Provisions relating to disability**

### **We recognise:**

4.3 The disability provisions in the Equality Act mainly replicate those in the former Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). There are some minor differences as follows:

- Unlike the DDA the Equality Act does not list the types of day to day activities which a disabled person must demonstrate that they cannot carry out, thus making the definition of disability less restrictive for disabled people to meet.
- Failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be defended as justified. The fact that it must be reasonable provides the necessary test.
- Direct discrimination against a disabled person can no longer be defended as justified - bringing it into line with the definition of direct discrimination generally.

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- We know from September 2012 schools and Local Authorities have a duty to supply auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments where these are not being supplied as part of Educational Health Care Plans or from other sources.

## **Definition of disability**

4.4 The Act defines disability as when a person has 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.' Some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect.

4.5 The Act sets out details of matters that may be relevant when determining whether a person meets the definition of disability. Long term is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.

## **Unlawful behaviour with regard to disabled pupils**

### **Direct discrimination**

#### **We understand:**

4.6 A school must not treat a disabled pupil less favourably simply because that pupil is disabled - for example by having an admission bar on disabled applicants.

4.7 A change for schools in this Act is that there can no longer be justification for direct discrimination in any circumstances. Under the DDA schools could justify some direct discrimination - if was a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim. What the change means is that if a school discriminates against a person purely because of his or her disability (even if they are trying to achieve a legitimate aim) then it would be unlawful discrimination as there can be no justification for their actions.

### **Indirect discrimination**

#### **We know:**

4.8 A school must not do something which applies to all pupils but which is more likely to have an adverse effect on disabled pupils only - for example having a rule that all pupils must demonstrate physical fitness levels before being admitted to the school - unless they can show that it is done for a legitimate reason, and is a proportionate way of achieving that legitimate aim.

## **Discrimination arising from disability**

### **We realise:**

4.9 A school must not discriminate against a disabled pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability - for example by not allowing a disabled pupil on crutches outside at break time because it would take too long for her to get out and back. Like indirect discrimination, discrimination arising from disability can potentially be justified.

## **Harassment**

### **We know:**

4.10 A school must not harass a pupil because of his disability - for example, a teacher shouting at the pupil because the disability means that he is constantly struggling with class-work or unable to concentrate.

## **Reasonable adjustments and when they have to be made**

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## **We acknowledge:**

4.11 The duty to make reasonable adjustments applies only to disabled people. For schools the duty is summarised as follows:

- 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 making alterations to physical features because this is already considered as part of their planning duties.

## **Auxiliary aids and services**

### **We know:**

4.12 The duty to provide auxiliary aids as part of the reasonable adjustment duty was a change for all schools from September 2012 and also extends to maintaining local authorities.

4.13 Many disabled children will have SEN and may need auxiliary aids which are necessary as part of their SEN provision; in some circumstances as part of an EHC plan. These aids may be provided in the school under the SEN route, in which case there will be no need for us to provide those aids as part of their reasonable adjustment duty.

4.14 Schools will have to consider whether to provide auxiliary aids as a reasonable adjustment for disabled children. This will particularly be the case where a disabled child does not have an SEN statement or where the statement does not provide the auxiliary aid or service.

4.15 There should be no assumption, however, that if an auxiliary aid is not provided under the SEN regime then it must be provided as a reasonable adjustment. Similarly, whilst schools and LAs are under the same reasonable adjustment duty, there should be no assumption that where it is unreasonable for a school to provide an auxiliary aid or service, for example on cost grounds, it would then be reasonable for the Local Authority to provide it. All decisions would depend on the facts of each individual case. The nature of the aid or service, and perhaps also the existence of local arrangements between schools and local authorities, will help to determine what would be reasonable for the school or the LA to provide. For example, where there is a centrally organised visual or hearing impairment service it may be reasonable for the Local Authority to provide more expensive aids or support through that service but not reasonable for an individual school to have to provide them.

4.16 The term "auxiliary aids" found in the Equality Act 2010 covers both auxiliary aids and services but there is no legal definition for what constitutes auxiliary aids and services. Considering the everyday meaning of the words, is, however, helpful. Legal cases have referred to the Oxford English Dictionary definition of auxiliary as "helpful, assistant, affording aid, rendering assistance, giving support or succour" and that auxiliary aids and services "are things or persons which help." Examples of what may be considered an auxiliary aid could be: hearing loops; adaptive keyboards and

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special software. However the key test is reasonableness and what may be reasonable for one school to provide may not be reasonable for another given the circumstances of each case.

4.17 Some disabled children will have a need for auxiliary aids which are not directly related to their educational needs or their participation in school life, for example, things which are generally necessary for all aspects of their life, such as hearing aids. It is likely to be held that it would be unreasonable for a school to be expected to provide these auxiliary aids.

### **Making reasonable adjustments**

#### **We note:**

4.18 The EHRC has published guidance on the auxiliary aids duty which includes advice on when it would be reasonable for schools to have to make adjustments and what factors a school should take into account in its assessment of whether or not it would be reasonable to make any particular adjustment. We know the guidance is available at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice/>.

4.19 A minor change for schools is that a failure to make a reasonable adjustment cannot now be justified, whereas under the previous disability discrimination legislation it could be. However this change should not have any practical effect due to the application of the reasonableness test - i.e. if an adjustment is reasonable then it should be made and there can be no justification for why it is not made. Schools will not be expected to make adjustments that are not reasonable.

4.20 In addition to having a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for particular individual disabled pupils, schools will also have to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally as it is likely that any school will have a disabled pupil at some point. However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments - e.g. being prepared to produce large font papers for pupils with a visual impairment even though there are no such pupils currently admitted to the school. Such a strategic and wider view of the school's approach to planning for disabled pupils will also link closely with its planning duties.

4.21 The Act does not set out what would be a reasonable adjustment or a list of factors to consider in determining what is reasonable. It will be for schools to consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of each case. However, factors a school may consider when assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment may include the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements, and whether aids have been made available through the Special Educational Needs route.

4.22 Cost will inevitably play a major part in determining what is reasonable and it is more likely to be reasonable for a school with substantial financial resources to have to make an adjustment with a significant cost, than for a school with fewer resources. For example, a small rural primary school may not be able to provide specialised IT equipment for any disabled pupils who may need it and it may not be reasonable for the school to provide that equipment. On the other hand, a much larger school might reasonably be expected to provide it.

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4.23 Often, though, effective and practicable adjustments for disabled pupils will involve little or no cost or disruption and are therefore very likely to be reasonable for a school to have to make.

4.24 Schools generally will try to ensure that disabled pupils can play as full a part as possible in school life and the reasonable adjustments duty will help support that. However, there will be times when adjustments cannot be made because to do so would have a detrimental effect on other pupils and would therefore not be reasonable - for example, if a school put on a geology field trip which necessarily involved climbing and walking over rough ground and after fully considering alternatives to accommodate a disabled pupil in a wheelchair who could not take part it determined that there was no viable alternative or way of enabling the disabled pupil to participate or be involved, it would not have to cancel the trip as originally planned. This is unlikely to constitute direct discrimination or failure to make a reasonable adjustment.

4.25 The reasonable adjustments duties on schools are intended to complement the accessibility planning duties and the existing SEN statement provisions which are part of education legislation, under which local authorities have to provide auxiliary aids to pupils with a statement of special educational need.

## **Schools' duties around accessibility for disabled pupils**

### **We understand:**

4.26 Schools and LAs need to carry out accessibility planning for disabled pupils. These are the same duties as previously existed under the DDA and have been replicated in the Equality Act 2010.

4.27 Schools must implement accessibility plans which are aimed at:

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

4.28 Schools will also need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them. At Springbank Primary the accessibility plan is a freestanding document.

## **The Public Sector Equality Duty**

### **We fully understand:**

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and Academies, and extends to certain protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

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5.2 Where schools are concerned, age will be a relevant characteristic in considering their duties in their role as an employer but not in relation to pupils.

5.3 All public bodies were previously bound by three separate sets of duties to promote disability, race and gender equality. The simpler, less bureaucratic, PSED has replaced those three duties.

5.4 With the PSED, as with the previous general duties, schools are subject to the need to have due regard to the three elements outlined above. What having "due regard" means in practice has been defined in case law and means giving relevant and proportionate consideration to the duty. For Springbank Primary this means:

- Decision makers in 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.
- Schools 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 PSED has to be integrated into the carrying out of the school's 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.
- We can't delegate responsibility for carrying out the duty to anyone else.

### Having "due regard"

#### **We acknowledge:**

5.5 The duty to have "due regard" to equality considerations means that whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, thought must be given to the equality implications. The significance of those implications - and the amount of thought that needs to be devoted to them - will vary depending on the nature of the decision. For example, a decision to change the time of school assembly is unlikely to have a significant impact on any particular group. On the other hand, deciding when and where to have a school trip may raise a range of considerations: are the facilities for boys and girls equivalent; are they accessible to disabled pupils; does the date cut across any religious holidays and so exclude some pupils, and so on. An initiative to raise pupil attainment in a single sex school might not have any gender implications, but there could be race issues that need to be considered. It is good practice for schools to keep a note of any equality consideration, although this does not necessarily need to take the form of a formal equality analysis. Publishing it will help to demonstrate that the due regard duty is being fulfilled.

5.6 It is good practice for schools to keep a written record to show that they have actively considered their equality duties and asked themselves relevant questions. We know there is no legal requirement to produce a formal equality impact assessment document, although for key decisions this might be a helpful tool.

5.7 If a school does not record its consideration of the general equality duty when making a decision or carrying out a particular function, this does not automatically mean that the duty to have 'due regard' has not been met. However, if challenged, it will be easier for a school to demonstrate that the duty has been met if a record has been made at the time. The duty only needs to be implemented in a light-touch way,

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proportionate to the issue being considered. At Springbank primary the equality incident form after trialling, is now an established feature of our school culture.

## **What compliance with the specific duties will mean for schools**

### **We understand our statutory duties:**

5.8 Mean that the purpose of the specific duties is to help public bodies fulfil their obligations under the general duty. They are designed to be flexible, light-touch and proportionate rather than being bureaucratic or a "tick-box" exercise. The emphasis is on transparency - making information available so that the school's local community can see how the school is advancing equality in line with the PSED, and what objectives it is using to make this happen.

5.9 The specific duties require schools:

(a) to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and

(b) to prepare and publish equality objectives.

At Springbank Primary School we update the published information at least annually and publish objectives at least once every four years.

### **We know that:**

5.10 Obligations under the PSED can be satisfied in a way that is proportionate to the decision making that is taking place. The duty is not prescriptive as to how it is satisfied so how one school complies with the duty in relation to a decision it is making can look different for organisations of different sizes and with different levels of resources.

5.11 Schools must publish information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are affected by their policies and practices. However, data about employees will not need to be published where a public authority has fewer than 150 employees. This means that for Springbank primary, only pupil-related data will need to be published.

5.12 The government is clear that the duties should not be overly burdensome on schools. Schools will not be required to collect any statistical data which they do not already collect routinely. A large amount of data is already collected by Springbank primary - ASP, which presents performance data for individual schools broken down by a number of relevant characteristics (sex, race, and also SEN which can be seen as a rough proxy for disability) and which includes comparative analysis with national statistics and with comparable schools, will be a particularly useful source.

5.13 It is also important to note that the published information does not necessarily have to be statistical data. Many other kinds of information can be used to show how the school is promoting equality

5.14 Under specific duties set out in previous equality legislation, schools were required to produce equality schemes in relation to race, disability and gender. Under the specific duties there are no requirements to create equality schemes.

## **Publishing information**

### **At Springbank Primary we publish/review:**

- the behaviour policy
- anti-bullying policy
- the recruitment / pay policies

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- equality decisions and plan for staff training on the equality act

### **We also:**

5.15 Advance equality of opportunity, in particular:-

(a) removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people which are connected to a particular characteristic they have (for example disabled pupils, or gay pupils who are being subjected to homophobic bullying)

(b) taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic and

(c) encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in any activities (for example encouraging both boys and girls, and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, to be involved in the full range of afterschool clubs).

5.16 Analyse attainment data to show how pupils with different characteristics (eg boys or girls) are performing. In this way areas of inequality are identified that may need to be addressed. ASP contains much detailed analysis by relevant characteristics. Springbank Primary is currently researching the use of Stonewall accreditation to show evidence of trends with children that have protected characteristics.

### **We consider:**

5.17 For some protected characteristics - religion, and particularly sexual orientation, for example - statistical data about pupils is less likely to be available, and it may well not be considered appropriate to try to obtain it. We will gain information from Stonewall or GIRES.

We will foster good relations across characteristics - (between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it) through:

- STARFISH and British Values
- The behaviour and anti-bullying policy
- Assemblies dealing with relevant issues

**This policy works in conjunction with the school's equality statement which includes the school's equality objectives.**



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