

---

# Equality Policy

---

# A Statement of Purpose, Values and Vision

Aquinas College strives to be a Catholic college for the whole community. Christ is at the very heart of our philosophy. This is expressed in our commitment to the Gospel values of freedom, justice and love.

*“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full”*

*John 10:10*

We affirm and value each member of our community, recognising the dignity and unique nature of each individual. In this way the presence of Christ is celebrated. We share in each other's strengths, support each other in our weaknesses, and strive for the highest standards of achievement in all we do. We also encourage a questioning stance towards the values of our increasing secular society.

In short, we aim to provide reasons for living and hoping.

# **Contents**

## **Contents**

- 1. Mission Statement**
- 2. Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice**
- 3. Equality and the law**
  - 3a. Race Equality**
  - 3b. Disability**
  - 3c. Gender Equality**
  - 3d. Sexual Orientation**
  - 3e. Community Cohesion**
- 4. Consultation and involvement**
- 5. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 6. Tackling discrimination**
- 7. Review of Progress and Impact**
- 8. Publishing the plan**
- 9. Equality Objectives**

# 1. Mission Statement

## ***Freedom , Justice and Love***

At Aquinas College, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all students, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the college, irrespective of race, gender, disability, or socio-economic background. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the college feel proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in college life.

The achievement of students will be monitored by race, gender and disability and we will use this data to support students, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging stereotyping and creating an environment which champions respect for all. At Aquinas College, we believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

## **2. Mainstreaming equality into policy and practice**

As well as the specific actions set by the college, we operate equality of opportunity in our day-to-day practice in the following ways:

### **Teaching and Learning**

We aim to provide all our students with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, we will:

- Use contextual data to improve the ways in which we provide support to individuals and groups of students;
- Monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and action any gaps;
- Take account of the achievement of all students when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets;
- Ensure equality of access for all students and prepare them for life in a diverse society;
- Use materials that reflect the diversity of the college population and local community in terms of race, gender and disability, without stereotyping;
- Promote attitudes and values that will challenge racist and other discriminatory behaviour or prejudice;
- Provide opportunities for students to appreciate their own culture and celebrate the diversity of other cultures, through our international links and enrichment activities like the India Project;
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their daughter's or son's education through the college's pastoral structures;
- Encouraging classroom and staffroom discussion of equality issues which reflect on social stereotypes, expectations and the impact on learning;
- Including teaching and classroom-based approaches appropriate for the whole college population, which are inclusive and reflective of our students.

## **Admissions**

Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on race, gender, disability or socio-economic factors. We also operate a non-academically selective admissions policy.

### **3. Equality and the law**

There are a number of statutory duties that must be met by every college in line with legislation from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), Disability Equality Duty (2005) and Equality Act (2006).

The objectives at the end of this Equality Plan outline the actions Aquinas College will take to meet the general duties detailed below.

## **3a. Race Equality**

This section of the plan reflects the general and specific duties of colleges as detailed in The Race Relations Act 1976 and as amended by The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The General Race Equality Duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate racial discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare an Equality Plan to include race equality;
- Assess the impact of our policies, including this Plan, on students, staff and parents by race, in particular, the achievement levels of these students.

## 3b. Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’.

The DDA 2005 has also extended the definition of disability as follows:

- People with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer (although not all cancers) are deemed disabled before they experience the long-term and substantial adverse effect on their activities;
- Section 18 has been amended so that individuals with a mental illness no longer have to demonstrate that it is “clinically well-recognised”, although the person must still demonstrate a long-term and substantial adverse impact on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 placed a general duty on schools, requiring them to have due regard for the following when carrying out and delivering services:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- Eliminating discrimination and harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encouraging participation in public life by disabled people;
- Taking steps to meet disabled people’s needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare and publish an Equality Plan identifying our disability equality goals and actions to meet them;
- Review and revise this every three years.

## **3c. Gender Equality**

The Gender Equality Duty 2006 places a general and specific duty on colleges to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender and to promote equality of opportunity between female and male pupils and between women and men and transgender people.

Under our general duty we will actively seek to:

- Eliminate discrimination on grounds of gender;
- Promote equality between men and women.

Under our specific duty we will:

- Prepare and publish an Equality Plan identifying our gender equality goals and actions to meet them;
- Review and revise this every three years.

## **3d. Sexual Orientation**

The Equality Act 2006 made provision for regulations to be introduced to extend protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief to sexual orientation.

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 came into force on 30 April 2007, and they make discrimination unlawful in the area of goods, facilities and services on grounds of sexual orientation. For colleges this means admissions, benefits and services for students and treatment of students.

## **3e. Community Cohesion**

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty on the governing bodies of state schools to promote community cohesion. Community cohesion encompasses promoting good relations between students from different races, faiths / beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. The duty came into force on 1 September 2007.

Aquinas College, by its mission and ethos, is committed to being an inclusive, cohesive and welcoming community. Our Statement of Purpose, Values and Vision asserts that, “We affirm and value each member of our community, recognising the dignity and unique nature of each individual.” Diversity is celebrated and equality is promoted and so community cohesion is encouraged.

## **4. Consultation and involvement**

It is a requirement that the development of this plan and the actions within it have been informed by the input of staff, students and parents and carers. We have achieved this by using the following to shape the plan:

- Feedback from the annual exit questionnaire
- Input from staff surveys or through staff meetings / INSET
- Feedback from the student council, tutorial programme, student focus groups
- Feedback at Governing body meetings.

# 5. Roles and Responsibilities

## The role of governors

- The governing body has set out its commitment to equal opportunities in this plan and it will continue to do all it can to ensure that the college is fully inclusive to students, and responsive to their needs.
- The governing body seeks to ensure that people are not discriminated against when applying for positions at our college on grounds of race, gender or disability.
- The governors take all reasonable steps to ensure that the college environment gives access to people with disabilities, and also strive to make college communications as inclusive as possible for parents, carers and students.
- The governors welcome all applications to join the college, whatever a young person's socio-economic background, race, gender or disability.
- The governing body ensures that no young person is discriminated against whilst in our college on account of their race, gender or disability

## The role of the Principal

- It is the Principal's role to implement the college's Equality Plan and he is supported by the governing body in doing so.
- It is the Principal's role to ensure that all staff are aware of the Equality Plan, and that teachers apply these guidelines in all situations.
- The Principal ensures that all appointments panels give due regard to this plan, so that no-one is discriminated against when it comes to employment or training opportunities.

- The Principal promotes the values of equal opportunity when developing the curriculum, and promotes respect for other people and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of college life.
- The Principal treats all incidents of unfair treatment and any resulting incidents with due seriousness.

## **The role of all staff: teaching and non-teaching**

- All staff will ensure that all students are treated fairly, equally and with respect, and will maintain awareness of the college's Equality Plan.
- All staff will strive to provide material that gives positive images based on race, gender and disability, and challenges stereotypical images.
- All staff will challenge any incidents of prejudice, racism or homophobia, and record any serious incidents, drawing them to the attention of the Principal.
- Teachers support the work of support staff and encourage them to intervene in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents.

# **6. Tackling discrimination**

Harassment on account of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation is unacceptable and is not tolerated within the school environment.

All staff are expected to deal with any discriminatory incidents that may occur. They are expected to know how to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping; and to support the full range of diverse needs according to a student's individual circumstances.

Racist and homophobic incidents and other incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with by the member of staff present, escalating to a class teacher / Principal where necessary. All incidents are reported to the Principal and racist incidents are reported to the governing body. .

## **What is a discriminatory incident?**

Harassment on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or other factors such as socio-economic status, can take many forms including verbal or physical abuse, name calling, exclusion from groups and games, unwanted looks or comments, jokes and graffiti.

A racist incident is defined by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) as:

'any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.

## **Types of discriminatory incident**

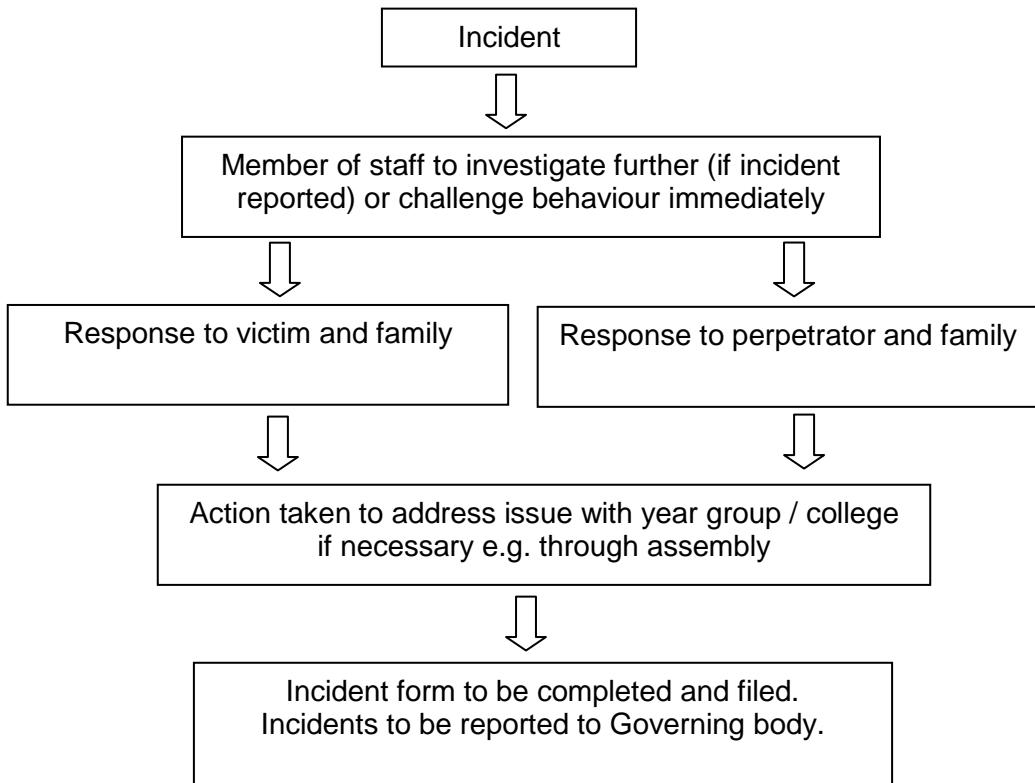
Types of discriminatory incidents that can occur are:

- Physical assault against a person or group because of their colour, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender;
- Use of derogatory names, insults and jokes;
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory graffiti;

- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory badges or insignia;
- Bringing discriminatory material into school;
- Verbal abuse and threats;
- Incitement of others to discriminate or bully due to victim's race, disability, gender or sexual orientation;
- Discriminatory comments in the course of discussion;
- Attempts to recruit others to discriminatory organisations and groups;
- Ridicule of an individual for difference e.g. food, music, religion, dress etc;
- Refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

## **Responding to and reporting incidents**

It should be clear to students and staff how they report incidents. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should view dealing with incidents as vital to the well-being of the whole college.



## **7. Review of Progress and Impact**

The Plan has been agreed by our Governing Body. We have a rolling programme for reviewing our college policies and their impact. In line with legislative requirements, we will review progress against our Equality Plan annually and review the entire plan and accompanying action plan on a three year cycle.

We make regular assessments of students' learning and use this information to track student progress. As part of this process, we will regularly monitor achievement by ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure that all groups of students are making the best possible progress, and take appropriate action to address any gaps.

## **8. Publishing the plan**

In order to meet the statutory requirements to the single equality scheme we will:

- Publish our plan/objectives on the college website;
- Raise awareness of the plan through the training of all staff, assemblies, staff meetings and other communications;
- Make sure hard copies are available.

# 9. Equality Objectives

- 1) To continue to monitor achievement in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability.
- 2) To further raise awareness of equality and diversity issues throughout the college community, to encourage greater involvement and engagement.
- 3) To further incorporate equality and diversity as part of staff development, including the collection of recruitment data

**Signed:**

---

Danny Pearson

Principal

---

Tom McGee

Chair of Governors

---

Sue Conroy

Equality & Diversity Coordinator  
Date: June 2012

---

Natalia Dawson

Student President 2012/13