



**Equality and Diversity Single  
Equality Scheme  
2016 - 2020**

# Introduction

*“Hello and welcome to Aquinas College”*



Aquinas College puts the care of each individual first. We go to great lengths to ensure that students select an appropriate course that will enable progression to higher education or employment and training. The College does not select on the grounds of academic ability, accepting all students irrespective of their ability, provided that the room and suitable courses are available. Our students study courses which relate to their individual interests and needs. Our basic aim is to care for students in a challenging and supportive environment – that good examination results follow is no surprise. The College is situated in a suburban area of Stockport which is easily accessible from the town centre. The College has parking facilities and is surrounded by well-maintained landscaped areas. We are very proud of our outstanding building and facilities which were completed in 2010 with a budget of £42 million. This has provided unrivalled facilities in all curriculum areas. We have the latest technology in each classroom together with excellent facilities in subject areas and across the college. We also have an excellent sports complex which is able to provide an extensive sports provision. The care and supportive environment we provide is also of course extended to our Staff, Parents, Carers and visitors to Aquinas College. The welcoming and friendly atmosphere, although difficult to describe, is commented on regularly by all who visit us in whatever capacity. How we achieve this is through our mission and ethos which forms the basis of everything we do.

## Statement of Purpose and Vision

Aquinas College is committed to ensuring equality of 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 strive vigorously to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage and we will actively combat bigotry.  
Yours sincerely

**Danny Pearson**  
Principal

## About us

Aquinas College is one of the largest Catholic sixth form colleges in the country. The College has over 2,200 full time 16-19 year old students with approximately 120 full time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff and 55 (FTE) support staff. The College has grown to this size from modest beginnings in 1980. It was opened in the premises of a former high school to provide sixth form education to Stockport's expected 200 Catholic 16-18 year old students. In 2010 the old building was demolished and the College moved to a purpose-built modern building on the same site.

The College now draws students from its four Catholic partner schools (three in Stockport and one in Buxton) and from many other schools in Stockport and neighbouring areas. Our admissions policy gives priority to Catholic students, others from Catholic schools, and to siblings of past or existing students.

We are not academically selective, welcoming all students for whom we have space and a suitable course. This is fully in keeping with the College's ethos, the importance we place on personal relationships and on developing the whole person. We believe that it is these aspects of the College which keep its reputation high, rather than simply our success in league tables and against national criteria.

The vast majority of each year's intake follows A level courses, some in combination with BTEC and other level 3 courses, together with fewer who may need to re-sit GCSEs. There is also provision for some level 1 literacy and numeracy, as well as entry level courses in our Pathways Department for students with moderate learning difficulties. We offer about 50 subjects at level 3 with all the students undertaking a core programme including tutorial, assembly, ethics and, for some, a Stretch and Challenge Programme.

In addition to the 16-19 year old students, the College has around 1,000 part time adult students who attend on Monday and Tuesday evenings following a wide range of courses. In common with other sixth form colleges, Aquinas College is centrally funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency. However, as a designated college, the premises remain the property of the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury. All staff are employed directly by the College. The terms and conditions of employment are in common with all sixth form colleges, those nationally negotiated by the Sixth Form Colleges' Association (SFCA).

The College's philosophy is based on the values contained in the Gospel, specifically those of freedom, justice and love. We welcome all young adults who wish to share in the Christian environment which we aim to foster. This environment is characterised by the individual care, guidance and support of each student as well as by the highest standards of academic work. The College aims to help each student grow towards fully mature adulthood by providing experiences which help in the search for truth, in making informed decisions, in accepting responsibility for one's actions and in co-operating with others. We strive to achieve this in an atmosphere that is adult, friendly and wholly supportive. Our most recent Ofsted inspection in January 2017 confirmed that the College remains "Good" in all areas. The inspectors also commented on the excellent care, support and guidance for students together with a strong atmosphere of mutual respect.

## Our Values

### *Freedom, Justice and Love*

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 increasingly secular society.

## The Local and National Context

### **Population**

Stockport houses a highly skilled, productive workforce which has established the Borough as a leading business location. It is one of the most populous districts in Greater Manchester, with people being drawn to the Borough by the quality of life, education and opportunities on offer. Whilst statistical analysis of both current and previous data highlights that the percentage of Stockport's resident population within the working age range (16 - 64) may be slightly lower than regional and national averages, local levels of employment and economic activity consistently exceed those found elsewhere, with 81.5% of the resident population economically active, compared with 77.2% regionally and 74.6% across the UK.

### **Information from the 2011 Census**

- In the 2011 census the population of Stockport was 283,275 and was made up of approximately 51% females and 49% males
- The average age of people in Stockport was 41, while the median age was also 41
- 90.4% of people living in Stockport were born in England. Other top answers for country of birth were 1.4% Scotland, 1.0% Ireland, 0.8% Wales, 0.8% Pakistan, 0.5% India, 0.5% Northern Ireland, 0.4% Iran, 0.2% Hong Kong, 0.2% China
- The religious make up of Stockport was 63.2% Christian, 25.1% No religion, 3.3% Muslim, 0.6% Hindu, 0.5% Jewish, 0.5% Buddhist, 0.1% Sikh, 0.1% Atheist. 18,510 people did not state a religion. 870 people identified as a Jedi Knight and 71 people said they believe in Heavy Metal.
- 96.9% of people living in Stockport spoke English. The other top languages spoken are 0.5% Urdu, 0.3% Polish, 0.3% Persian/Farsi, 0.2% Punjabi, 0.2% Arabic, 0.1% All other Chinese, 0.1% Cantonese Chinese, 0.1% Gujarati, 0.1% Bengali.

### **Information taken from Stockport Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Stockport Council)**

As well as trends in overall numbers of people and the geographic variance there are other key demographic trends to consider:

#### Changes in ethnicity

- The population of Stockport continues to become more ethnically diverse, especially in younger populations to the west of the borough. Immigration rates in Stockport are lower than national averages
- The age patterns of Stockport's BME populations are also different, with a far younger profile than average
- 20% of babies born in Stockport in 2013-14 were non-white, and rates are almost 50% in Heald Green and Cheadle & Gatley
- The population is therefore likely to continue to become more diverse.

#### Changes in family and household structures

- The number of lone parent and one person households has increased over the last decade, perhaps leading to a more isolated population.
- Hazel Grove and Brinnington & Central have experienced the largest increase in total households, and especially in one person and lone parent families.

Ethnic Group		Persons		Proportion	
		2001	2011	2001	2011
White	British	264,279	252,044	92.9%	89.0%
	Irish	4,155	3,938	1.5%	1.4%
	Other white	3,796	4,837	1.3%	1.7%
	<b>TOTAL WHITE</b>	<b>272,230</b>	<b>260,819</b>	<b>95.7%</b>	<b>92.1%</b>
Mixed	White & Black Caribbean	953	1,734	0.3%	0.6%
	White & Black African	413	775	0.1%	0.3%
	White & Asian	915	1,460	0.3%	0.5%
	Other mixed	745	1,135	0.3%	0.4%
	<b>TOTAL MIXED</b>	<b>3,026</b>	<b>5,104</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
Asian or Asian British	Indian	1,867	2,786	0.7%	1.0%
	Pakistani	2,949	6,673	1.0%	2.4%
	Bangladeshi	353	705	0.1%	0.2%
	Chinese	1,315	1,722	0.5%	0.6%
	Other Asian	798	1,876	0.3%	0.7%
	<b>TOTAL ASIAN</b>	<b>7,282</b>	<b>13,762</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
Black or Black British	Black Caribbean	660	745	0.2%	0.3%
	Black African	352	976	0.1%	0.3%
	Other Black	167	237	0.1%	0.1%
	<b>TOTAL BLACK</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>1,958</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
Other Ethnic Groups	Arab	-	727	-	0.3%
	Any other ethnic group	-	905	-	0.3%
	<b>TOTAL OTHER</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>1,632</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

Stockport is less ethnically diverse than the national average with 92% of the population identifying themselves as white in the 2011 Census compared to 86% nationally.

People who describe themselves as Asian Pakistani are the largest Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) group in Stockport, at more than 6,600.

Over time however the diversity of the population is increasing and the number of people identifying themselves as from a BME group almost doubled from 2001 to 2011, to 22,500.

Religious Group		Persons		Proportion	
		2001	2011	2001	2011
Religion	Christian	214,610	179,055	75.4%	63.2%
	Muslim	4,977	9,431	1.7%	3.3%
	Jewish	1,654	1,340	0.6%	0.5%
	Hindu	1,331	1,666	0.5%	0.6%
	Other religions	1,443	2,147	0.5%	0.8%
	No religion	40,346	71,126	14.2%	25.1%
	Religion not stated	20,167	18,510	7.1%	6.5%

Stockport has seen an increase in both the Muslim population and people of no religion over the last decade. On the whole these populations are younger than average.

## Key Facts 2016

- Currently Stockport's population is 288,733, 62.0% of which (176,700 individuals) are working age.
- The Borough has historically enjoyed high levels of economic activity, with 81.5% of Stockport's working age population economically active. This is a 2.2% point increase on last year's report.
- Stockport supports the third largest workforce within Greater Manchester, with 119,000 people employed within the Borough.
- Latest data shows that Stockport has 11,835 businesses, an increase of 300 on last year's report.
- As a result, Stockport cultivates an effective environment for enterprise and business start-ups, with data showing that the Borough has consistently outperformed conurbation, regional and national levels for start-ups per capita.
- Stockport is home to a highly educated resident population, with 41.4% of residents educated to NVQ level 4 or above. Only 5.5% of the borough's population have no qualifications, compared with 10.6% across Greater Manchester.
- Stockport supports a diverse economy. Over the next 10 years, ICT, construction, administrative and support services, professional, scientific and technology, arts, entertainment and recreation are expected to be the Borough's high growth sectors.
- The overall Stockport population is projected to grow by around 5% in the next ten years. The older population is rising even more quickly, those aged 75-84 and 85 and over are expected to rise by 29% and 35% respectively.

## Why choose Aquinas

### Our Strategic Aims and College Mission

As part of the College's mission, our students are at the heart of all we do

- We want the best for each of them as if they were part of our own family
- We focus on challenge and transformation with our students to encourage them to be the very best they can be
- We aim to produce the extraordinary from the ordinary
- We want the poor to be poor no longer
- We strive to be the very best that we can be as a Catholic college

Consequently, we aim to:

1. Maintain the culture, ethos and mission of the college.
2. Deliver outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
3. Continue to improve on the high quality advice and guidance given to students, in the context of curriculum changes and national changes to post 16 education
4. Continue to maintain high retention levels and to secure positive destinations for all students.
5. Continue to promote a learning culture and reflective practice to raise standards and encourage accountability.
6. Prioritise, embed and assess the development of employability skills including independent learning, thinking skills, ICT, English and Maths.
7. Further develop the effectiveness of our provision relating to equality and diversity and welfare, including Safeguarding and promoting British Values.
8. Move towards whole college ALPs grade 3 and continue to reduce blue ALPs in curriculum areas.
9. To manage our resources ethically to deliver excellent outcomes in a financially sustainable way.

### Excellent Outcomes for Learners

Aquinas has a reputation for excellent outcomes for learners with a 98% pass rate at A level and 99% pass rate for vocational courses. The majority of students achieve high grades (A\* - B) at A level and Distinction/Distinction \* for vocational courses. Regardless of students' GCSE results, we look to help them find a course to match their ability and interests. There is an exceptional range of academic and vocational study options on offer at the College. Our highly experienced and dedicated staff are motivated and focused, backed up by up-to-date resources for all subjects.

### First Rate Pastoral Care and Support for Students

We pride ourselves on supporting our students to achieve the best outcomes possible. The College community embraces students from all backgrounds and faiths. Students meet with a Group Tutor every day to promote 1:1 support in every aspect of the student experience; from guidance with UCAS and employment applications to help with coping with the demands of college life and preparation for the future.

### Outstanding Advice and Guidance to help with their future Career

From the start of the year students are encouraged to think about employability skills and how to add to existing skills and experience during their time at Aquinas. The Careers service here offers a professional and impartial service for all students supporting progression to university, employment or apprenticeships. Around 70% of our students progress to university, 34% gaining places at Russell Group universities. Specialist advice is also available for students applying for medical fields and Oxbridge. Our Stretch and Challenge programme and Extended Project also provide

students with the opportunity to enhance their profile further when applying for these competitive places. In 2016 the college was accredited with the Matrix Quality Standards Award for the Information, Advice and Guidance given across the college to our students.

The Careers team assists all students to develop their career management skills to support their career aspirations. The staff are professionally qualified to the highest standard providing impartial information, advice and guidance. Aquinas supports students in making the next step whether into an apprenticeship, employment or university. Staff are committed to offering the best careers advice possible and students have access to a wealth of resources both in the careers library and our Careers Moodle website. One of the main elements of the college's tutorial programme is educating students on their future options. This includes not only talking about the local job market, but how to make decisions about their future, considering their skills, how to search for University courses and also information about how to make an application for an apprenticeship.

To support our Careers Education programme we invite over 50 universities, training providers and employers to our After Aquinas Options Evening in April allowing students and parents to find out more about courses and opportunities for an apprenticeship. Students are encouraged to attend university open days during the summer term and we also organise trips to Oxford and Cambridge universities. The College also holds a Careers Day in July where students have the opportunity to listen to talks about different careers from people working in that environment. They have over 60 talks to choose from throughout the day. Although the majority of our students progress to university we have close links with apprenticeship training providers and support students to progress into employment. Training providers come into college throughout the year giving talks and information about the opportunities available.

## Full and Varied Enrichment Opportunities

Our students have a competitive edge when applying to university and employment through their involvement in our wide range of extracurricular opportunities. We run a full programme of activities which offer students really exciting and diverse experiences. Students have access to and are encouraged to take part in our Enrichment Programme selecting from Duke of Edinburgh awards, Debating Society, various Arts & Culture activities and Scripture study. 'Sports Opportunities' offers a wide range of activities from beginner to elite performer. 'Arts and Culture': creative opportunities including creative writing or swing band. They are also encouraged to take part in 'Challenge yourself': whether it's volunteering in the community or building a business from scratch there's something to suit every interest. Some are short 6 week courses and others are full year programmes:

There are also a number of exchanges we offer and students have visited many different countries through this broadening student horizons with many European and international links including; Vietnam, Italian Exchange, and Mumbai working with underprivileged children. Each year a group of students and staff travel to India to work with street and slum children. This is a major part of our college charitable work – Aquinas India Project, which raises a considerable amount of money for the charity, Prem Dan. We firmly believe that the Enrichment activities at Aquinas really do enrich student's lives and assists with developing tolerance and social awareness.

## Community, Wellbeing and Equality of Opportunity

### Chaplaincy

The Chapel is at the heart of the College and exists for students with or without faith. Our beautiful chapel is available during the week for Mass prayers or just as a calm, reflective space. Mass is celebrated weekly and each day begins with morning prayers.

Our lay chaplain provides support to both our students and staff who might want to talk and is available most times of the day.

## **Ethics Lessons**

Ethics lessons form part of our students' core timetable. Our course identifies and promotes exploration of and reflection upon questions which have ultimate meaning and significance. Students are encouraged to develop skills of critical enquiry and analysis. The programme centres on core ideas central to religion, philosophy, faith, trust, belief, values and needs. It is seen as an open-ended search for truth which respects the freedom and dignity of each student. Ethics is compulsory for every student at Aquinas College.

## **Student Support**

Student support services at Aquinas are:

- Comprehensive
- Well established
- Highly regarded by students, parents/carers and inspectors

We aim to offer all students outstanding support throughout their time at Aquinas. Our pastoral systems and core curriculum are essential to students fulfilling their potential, not only in terms of their chosen subjects but in terms of developing their interpersonal, employability and thinking skills.

Pastoral care is led by one of the college's Assistant Principals and he is supported by a team of Senior Tutors and Group Tutors whose aim is to develop educated, socially responsible and highly employable citizens of the future.

All of our students are members of a tutor group and this is an important part of the guidance and support system. The tutor group meets every day. The Group Tutor will be the students' first point of contact and provides support with any difficulties encountered on a day-to-day basis. In tutor groups, the students will work through the College's Ten:10 programme. The Ten:10 programme concentrates on personal, social and career development.

The Senior Tutor is another vital contact who oversees the work of the Group tutor. Together they monitor student attendance and performance and the Group Tutors will meet with their tutees on a one-to one basis to discuss their progress, where they are heading and how to get there to enable them to achieve their personal targets.

The Student Information Services Team at Aquinas deal with a wide range of enquiries and provide key information and help on many college services. The team is friendly, approachable and highly efficient and also supports many other areas of college life eg supporting our commitment to Safeguarding, pastoral systems, the India Project, our Learning Mentors, Bursary and any first aid requirements.

## **Counselling**

We recognise the importance of supporting the mental health as well as the physical health of our staff and students. The College employs two counsellors accessible to students. The counsellors will triage in the first instance and will signpost students to external support or arrange for a course of appointments within college depending on needs. The College provides external counselling sessions for staff through occupational health referrals.

## **Learning Support Department**

Our Learning Support Team is made up of specialist Learning Support Tutors and Assistants who enable students with specific needs to succeed. The team offers assessment of learning needs, leading to individual support sessions, further assessment and/or exam access arrangements.

Students are encouraged to approach any member of staff if difficulties or problems arise and any student can approach the Learning Support Team for support. About 20% of Aquinas Students get some support from the Learning Support Team. Some of these students had support at school but many did not.

## **Pathways Department**

Our Pathways Department is a supported learning environment within the College. Typically students have learning difficulties and disabilities and are working at levels between P6 and Entry 3. Courses focus on developing skills to

further independence and cover essential skills and activities ie Daily Living, Community and Leisure and Personal Care. The students also learn vocational skills: completing job applications, CVs, Interview Techniques.

The Pathways students have the same access to college facilities including the Fitness Gym, Library, Canteen and communal study areas and are supported where necessary to utilise them. They are also supported by Services for Young people, who visit college to discuss their future training/work needs.

### **Bursary**

The College has a bursary fund to assist students who experience financial difficulty to continue their education. The funds are intended to help towards travel costs to college and resources required for their courses.

## **Students**

### **Student Profile**

Student data is captured as part of the enrolment process. It is closely monitored and evaluated in order to close any performance gaps. The information gathered is monitored and assessed annually to ensure we are meeting our EDI responsibilities. In summary, the data shows the following profiles:

- 54% females and 46% males
- 87.21% White British and 12.79% other Ethnic Groups
- 33% Catholics, 36% Non-Catholic Christians, 23% of no faith, 5% of other faiths and 3% would rather not say

### **Admissions**

The Governors are committed to maintaining the College's open access admissions policy. Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and do not discriminate on race, gender, disability or socio-economic factors. The admissions policy for all students is described in the College prospectus. Appeals against a decision not to offer a place are dealt with under the complaints policy

### **Student Council**

The aim of the Student Council is to represent students and enhance the quality of college life. The Council is made up of students from both year groups, meetings are held weekly and all are encouraged to attend. The Council aims to ensure that students' opinions are considered in the day to day administration and future plans of the College. This is achieved through Student Council members being represented on a variety of groups, for example, Equality and Diversity, Healthy College, amongst others. The Council's President and Vice President are also Student Governors and work closely with the Principal. Throughout the year, the Council liaises with the student body to gain feedback and elicit opinions.

### **Student Voice**

Throughout the year, the College invites students to complete feedback surveys or to participate in focus groups as the College believes it can only develop with their input and support.

### **Student Ambassadors**

The College encourages all students to engage in college life and being a Student Ambassador is an excellent way to be involved. Student Ambassadors may be asked to help out at college events, represent the college at external events and as an E-Ambassador assist staff and students in the use of Information Technology.

# Staff

## Staff Profile

Staff profile data is obtained as part of the recruitment and selection process and on an annual basis staff are asked to check and amend their personal information to ensure its accuracy. The information gathered is monitored and assessed annually to ensure we are meeting our EDI responsibilities. In summary the data shows:

- 64% females and 36% males
- Average employee age of 45
- 7.7% of staff have declared a disability (based on broad categories of disability)
- 90.2% White British, 5.77% White other and 4.03% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)
- 16 employees are 65+ years old

## Recruitment

Aquinas College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all those who learn and work here. The College positively welcomes applications from all sections of the community. Bearing in mind the aptitudes of the individual concerned any reasonable adaptations required at interview or employment are considered and implemented where possible. Where an existing employee becomes disabled every effort is made to ensure that employment with the College continues.

## Induction and INSET

At induction, new staff are provided with booklets called “Embedding Equality and Diversity into the Curriculum” and “Embedding Equality and Diversity into your work”. Staff members are asked to sign a document to confirm they have read and understood the information provided at induction. Equality and Diversity related training is provided through INSET during the year to ensure the embedding of Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and British Values into the Curriculum.

## Policies

The College’s Human Resources Department staff members are fully trained to support any concerns or grievances relating to treatment as a result of a protected characteristic. The College’s Staff Code of Conduct, Equality and Diversity, Respecting Each Other (Bullying and Harassment), Grievance and Disciplinary Policies are fit for purpose and readily available on the College’s intranet system (Sharepoint). Staff are reminded on a regular basis where policies and the Staff Information Booklet can be found.

## Equality and Diversity Co-ordinators and Steering Group

There are two staff members in college with paid additional responsibility for the co-ordination of EDI. They are responsible to the Vice Principal and have particular responsibility to develop and implement policies, procedures and initiatives to promote equality of opportunity and diversity and meet legal obligations by:

- chairing an equality and diversity group, making sure that an appropriate agenda is produced and minutes published
- organising an equality and diversity week, liaising as appropriate with relevant staff to provide assemblies, tutorial materials etc
- gathering, analysing and utilising data to inform policies, procedures and practices
- keeping updated on current good practice and any changes in relevant legislation and communicating this as appropriately
- cascading good practice to all staff
- liaising with other agencies as required
- representing the college on the Six Colleges Consortium Equality and Diversity Group
- working with student representatives

A meeting of this group is held once every half term.

## **Continuing Professional Development**

The College encourages staff to improve qualifications and supports, wherever possible, their continuing professional development. Teaching staff have five in-service training days in each year and all staff attend any relevant training in line with their roles and responsibilities. The College's policy is to provide training, career development and opportunities for promotion for all college staff.

## **Communication and Consultation**

- Well-being Survey

On a bi-annual basis the College asks staff to complete a "wellbeing" survey. The purpose of the survey is to identify any risk factors in the working environment. The questions cover workload, working conditions, clarity of roles and responsibilities, levels of support they receive and whether they have ever been subjected to bullying or harassment at work. Follow up focus group meetings are held. The findings are analysed and appropriate actions identified and implemented.

- Staff Meetings and College Briefings

Staff are provided with briefings twice weekly. These are meetings at which matters of immediacy are discussed. Contributions come from anyone – they are not restricted to management announcements. Notes are written up and published. More formal meetings are staff meetings and Curriculum Leaders meetings. In addition, there are small groups dealing with quality and curriculum. The Senior Leadership Team meets weekly. Staff meetings and briefings provide further opportunities to share information relating to our commitment to EDI and are used to provide bitesize training and to share best practice.

- Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

The College also has a joint consultative committee (JCC) made up of union representatives from teaching and support staff, a member of the governing body, HR representation and the Principal. The purpose and remit of this committee is to review college policies and working practices to ensure they are fit for purpose and provide a fair and equitable working environment.

- The Governing Body

The College provides its Governing Body with relevant data and information relating to any grievance and disciplinary matters or any complaints relating to protected characteristics. They are also informed annually of staffing matters and ill health statistics with regard to work related stress.

## **Work life Balance**

The College recognises the benefit of encouraging and supporting staff to find a work life balance. We welcome requests from all college staff for flexible/part time working and special leave covering ie time off for dependants (EDL), religious observance, shared parental leave etc.

## The Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Duty for Public Sector Bodies

Through the Single Equality Scheme, we will tackle discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all people. Aquinas College is committed to providing services that promote equality, value diversity and community cohesion and strives to ensure that everyone in college is treated with dignity and respect.

We will make sure that our employment practices are fair and promote equality; continue to take positive action to address any under representation in our staff, student, and corporation profiles and to tackle any performance gaps for equality groups. We will also work to remove barriers to success or progression to staff or students and actively celebrate the diversity of our staff and students and the communities to which they belong. We will ensure that the principles of this scheme are reflected within our policies, procedures and services and form part of everything we do. This is an ongoing commitment to help to ensure that our services meet the varied and individual needs of our staff, students and wider community.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplified the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the law in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and inequality. The public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

Public bodies subject to the specific duties must publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty. This means that the information they publish must show that they had due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Aquinas College will have due regard to the statutory duties that must be met in line with legislation from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) Disability Equality Duty (2005) Gender Equality Duty 2006 and the Equality Act (2010). The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are:

- age
- disability
- marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment

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 socioeconomic 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.

In relation to The Equality Duty, Aquinas College strives to uphold the three general aims. We uphold these aims in our policy, day-to-day practice and our equality objectives. We will, therefore, have due regard in relation to the above protected characteristics to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations
- encourage participation
- meet needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment
- promote equality
- promote community cohesion between peoples of different religions or belief

Under our specific duty we will:

- ensure our equality objectives include all the protected characteristics
- assess the impact of our policies on students, staff and parents
- ensure all students are aware of the relevant college policies and feel confident to report any incidents of discrimination or harassment
- ensure the facilities, resources and services of the College meet the needs of all our learners, particularly our disabled learners
- offer positive action for disabled learners when appropriate

## Scheme 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, regardless of 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 College staff**

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 and support staff work together in a positive way against any discriminatory incidents.

### **Tackling Discrimination**

Harassment on account of race, gender, disability, religion or sexual orientation is unacceptable and is not tolerated within the College 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 / Assistant Principal Pastoral/Principal where necessary. All incidents are reported to the Principal and racist incidents are reported to the governing body.

### **Types of discriminatory incident**

- Physical assault against a person or group because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion, 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. appearance, religion, dress etc
- Refusal to co-operate with other people on grounds of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

## **Implementing 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:

- track groups of learners to ensure we are providing effective support to individuals and groups of students from all protected characteristics
- monitor achievement data by ethnicity, gender and disability and to take action to close any gaps, not just retrospectively but throughout the year to target students more effectively

- take account of the background of all students when planning for future learning with the use of badges which identify different groups of learners for the teacher
- ensure equality of access for all students
- use materials that reflect the diversity of the College and UK population 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 both the core and enrichment programmes
- seek to involve all parents and carers in supporting their child's education through the College's pastoral structures
- deliver INSET to train and equip staff with the knowledge and strategies to tackle EDI in the classroom with confidence
- include teaching and classroom-based approaches appropriate for the whole College population, which are inclusive and reflective of the diversity of our student body

### **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 from parents/carers via parental surveys
- feedback at Governing body meetings

### **Complaints and Breaches of the Scheme**

Breaches of this scheme will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of our other college policies are dealt with. Complaints in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity for the Single Equality Scheme will be handled through the College complaints and grievances procedures.

Acts of discrimination (direct and indirect), harassment, victimisation or abuse will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence. The College will seek to provide a supportive environment for stakeholders who make claims of discrimination, harassment or victimisation through the appropriate procedure.

We are fully committed to meeting our legal obligation to promote equality. Staff can raise issues with their line managers or through HR., Alternatively, they can seek the advice of the Section Head. Students can raise issues through their teachers, Personal Tutor, Learner Voice or Student Council.

The College will seek to provide a supportive environment for incidents of harassment, bullying and discrimination. The bullying and harassment policy can be used to report and investigate equality issues regarding bullying and harassment. Any incidents of hate crime will follow the procedure as outlined in the bullying and harassment policy.

Complaints will be monitored annually and reported to the Equality, Diversity & inclusivity Steering Group. Specific monitoring will also take place in relation to bullying, harassment and discrimination incidents for both staff and students.

## 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.

