



Equality and Diversity Policy

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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 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.

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

Aquinas is a Catholic Sixth Form College established to serve the needs of Catholic students in the surrounding areas. It welcomes applications from and provides access for a number of students of other faiths and no-faith who are sympathetic to the Christian ethos. Our Statement of Purpose, Vision and Values commits us to the individual care, guidance and support of each student. We aim to affirm and value each member of the community recognising the dignity and unique nature of each individual.

Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to promote, implement and monitor equality of opportunity for all individuals at Aquinas ensuring that the College meets all legal requirements and obligations. On the principle that everyone should be valued equally. It should be viewed as an integral aspect of all College procedures and will be a consideration in all College developments. The concept of equal opportunity is the foundation on which fair practice for everyone is built.

Upon entry to the College, all members of the community (staff, students and applicants) are expected to abide by the requirements of this policy and related equality and diversity legislation. All members of the community (staff, students and applicants) have equality of opportunity regardless of age, class, ethnic origin, faith, gender, marital status, nationality, political belief and sexual identity. The College welcomes the Disability Discrimination Act. We will make all reasonable adjustments to all aspects of the College to avoid substantial disadvantage to any disabled student, staff member or other disabled people.

We seek to provide a welcoming, non-bureaucratic atmosphere and to create an environment in which all staff, students and visitors feel at ease. The College will strive to remove environmental barriers which may impede access for the disabled and is committed to becoming barrier-free as quickly as funding allows. We endeavour to promote positive attitudes to equality in all students and staff. The translation of this policy into practice is the responsibility of everyone in College.

This policy statement has been taken into consideration with reference to the following relevant policies

- Recruitment Policy
- Respecting Each Other (Bullying and Harassment)
- Stress
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedure

Scope

This policy applies to the whole College, including students, governors, staff, work placement providers, and visitors and works in conjunction with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives.

Governors are responsible for ensuring that the College complies with the Employment Equality Act and for approving and reviewing the E, D & I Policy and monitoring its implementation.

The Principal is responsible for giving a consistent and high-profile lead on equality issues, promoting the E, D&I Policy inside and outside the institution and making sure this policy is followed.

The EDI Group is responsible for the monitoring and review of the E, D&I Policy and for evaluating its effectiveness. This group will include actions related to discrimination in line with College objectives. The College objectives will incorporate actions and targets for continuous improvement in achieving equality. The Committee is also responsible for the systematic monitoring of the performance indicators included in these objectives.

The Human Resources Department is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of all aspects of this policy relating to the employment of staff. This includes the monitoring of fair selection processes and their impact on the staff profile of the College at all levels.

Managers are responsible for putting this policy and its strategies and processes into practice, for making sure that all staff know their responsibilities and receive support and training in carrying these out. They will also follow the relevant processes and take action against staff or students who discriminate.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are able to recognise bias and stereotyping, and to challenge or report it if they witness it. They are also responsible for promoting equality and good relations, for ensuring that they do not discriminate against others and for taking up training and development opportunities to keep up to date with legislation and best practice.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they do not discriminate against anyone, ensuring that they are able to recognise bias and stereotyping, and to challenge or report it if they witness it.

Equality and Diversity Commitment

Curriculum

We aim to ensure that the curriculum, its delivery and resources will be planned to maintain equality of opportunity. We aim to ensure that these will be free of any discriminatory assumptions, images, language and/or stereotyping. We seek to ensure that the curriculum offered to each individual student matches the identified needs of that student. This involves guidance, counselling, induction and support. We endeavour to deliver a curriculum, which gives all learners a chance to realise their full potential. The spectrum of courses will, as far as possible, reflect the needs of students, the local community and national requirements. Appropriate learning support will be provided for students according to individual needs. Within the College community, we acknowledge that particular groups are under-represented. We undertake to identify barriers to access and seek to remove them.

EDI Group

In order to ensure that the policy is implemented effectively there is an EDI Group which meets regularly and is chaired by the EDI Representative. The role of the group is to raise the profile of EDI issues within Aquinas College and to ensure

that it promotes a culture of equality and inclusivity. This involves monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the policy and procedures. As part of this process relevant statistical data relating to student admissions, retention, achievement and destinations will be collected and analysed as well as other relevant data relating to equality and diversity and Aquinas College.

Parents/Carers

Parents and Carers are guided to read the College's equality objectives and its equality policy which are available on our website.

Relationships

We aim to foster good interpersonal relationships between staff and students, students and students, staff and staff, in the context of a culture of mutual respect. The working environment should encourage high performance, co-operation between individuals, and also recognise and accept needs and differences. We will challenge and act positively in the event of any language or behaviour which is offensive to any individual or group. This forms the basis of the College's Respecting Each Other (Bullying and Harassment Policy) the Staff Code of Conduct and the Student/College Agreement.

Recruitment, Advertising and Selection

The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of experience, abilities and qualifications. The College is committed to applying its equality, diversity and inclusion policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the College will, as far as reasonably practicable:

- Ensure advertisements are not confined to those publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group
- Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or which would exclude disabled job applicants
- Avoid prescribing any requirements as to marital or civil partnership status
- Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees of any particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or from employees with a disability.
- Recruitment for the positions of Principal, Vice-Principal and Head of RE are designated for Catholics only. This is in line with the Equality Duty whereby job selection can legally be selective in faith schools.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All applications will be processed in the same way. The staff responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application. Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two interviewers and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. The selection of new staff will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question.

The College complies with The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 in respect of employment and learner admissions and seeks to ensure that, where appropriate, unrelated criminal convictions do not interfere with an individual's life at

College. When employing staff the College will endeavour not to discriminate. However, some convictions will be relevant when making appointments. This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Recruitment and Selection Policy and the DBS Policy and Procedure.

Terms of Employment, Benefits, Facilities and Services

All terms of employment including training, benefits, facilities and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

Trade Unions

The College will not discriminate against learners or staff who belong or do not belong to a trade union and will adhere to the concept of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive freedom of speech.

Visitors and Contractors

Visitors and contractors are greeted and provided with a pass when they arrive at one of our reception areas and are provided with information relating to our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the expectation of them to abide by our policies.

Protected Characteristics

Age:

The College actively avoids any form of age discrimination within the recruitment and selection process as referred to in the College's Recruitment and Selection Policy. When completing Professional Review documentation all managers and supervisors should avoid any reference to age or phrases that generate the concept of a required, preferred or "not preferred" age.

Any promotion available will be assessed on skills and experience appropriate to perform the collection of duties which together comprise the post. No assumptions will be made with regard to succession planning either in discussion or in written format that anyone will retire on a set date (unless they have stated this).

Age discrimination is also referred to within the College's Respecting Each Other (Bullying and Harassment) Policy.

Disability:

The College is committed to promoting access to people with difficulties. A further commitment is to work towards supporting and enabling learners or staff with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, specific learning difficulties, special psychological needs and medical conditions which may have an impact on day-to-day activities, to take part in all aspects of the College's academic, working and social programmes. With disabled job applicants, the College will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to organise premises in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled. The above is used in conjunction with the College's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Gender Reassignment:

The College is committed to upholding equal rights of transgendered people and will support a member of the College who intends to, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth (26 weeks), and this includes not treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding. The College is committed to protecting these rights.

Race:

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

The College is committed to eliminating racial discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. 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.

Religion and Belief:

The College respects the right of individuals to hold their own religious and philosophical beliefs. Individuals are expected to respect the views and beliefs of others. The expression of intolerant beliefs and opinions that infringe the rights of others is not acceptable.

Sex:

The College is committed to ensuring that both female and male staff and learners are given equal access to all areas of College life; appropriate non-sexist language is used and stereotypical views are challenged. The College will not enquire about a person's marital status. The College is committed to equal pay in employment. It believes its male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, the College will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

Sexual Orientation:

The College is committed to welcoming individuals of all sexual orientations, both employees and learners. The College will respond sensitively and supportively whenever individuals raise the issue of their sexuality. The College will be proactive in supporting a safe and positive environment where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals feel able to choose whether or not to be open about their sexuality and know that their choice will be respected.

Legislative Framework

A new Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Equality Act brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Combined, they make up a new Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The Act simplifies, strengthens and harmonises the current legislation to provide Britain with a new discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

The nine main pieces of legislation that have merged are:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- the Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

There are also a number of Equality Act Codes of Practice which can be found through the link below:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

Prohibited Conduct

The Equality Act 2010 extends the scope of what conduct is prohibited in relation to the protected characteristics. The following provides an overview of what is included within the scope of the legislation.

Direct Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Associative Discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possess a protected characteristic. Associate discrimination already applies to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It is now extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

Perceptive Discrimination is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. It already applies to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation and is now extended to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex.

Combined Discrimination or dual discrimination is where a person is discriminated against by another because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics e.g. if someone is unfairly treated because they are female and disabled.

Discrimination arising from disability is discrimination against a disabled person because of something arising in consequence of the disability and it cannot be shown to be proportionate to achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination already applies to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership and is now extended to cover disability and gender reassignment.

Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you have acted reasonably in managing your business, i.e. that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision you make in running the organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful. Being proportionate really means being fair and reasonable, including showing that you've looked at 'less discriminatory'

alternatives to any decision you make.

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”. Protection includes harassment because of perception and association. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves.

Third Party Harassment. The Equality Act makes an organisation potentially liable for harassment of their employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of the company, such as clients or customers. The organisation will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, and they are aware that it has taken place and have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again. This already applies to sex and is now extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. A person is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Reasonable Adjustments. As well as making it unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably because of a reason relating to their disability, it is also discrimination if an organisation fails to make ‘reasonable adjustments’. Reasonable adjustments aim to remove the disadvantage that a disabled person experiences because of their disability. Making reasonable adjustments means amending policies, practices or procedures and/or providing aids and services.

Positive Action. The Equality Act allows an organisation to take Positive Action if they think that employees or job applicants who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to that characteristic, or if their participation in an activity is disproportionately low.

Genuine Occupational Requirement. In some circumstances it is legal to recruit someone purely on the basis of their characteristic. This is where it is legal to recruit someone on the basis of their age, race, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief, where there is a genuine occupational requirement for the job.

Tackling Discrimination

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.

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 College
- 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.

The College will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of discrimination or harassment from members of a particular race, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or age or from employees who have undergone gender reassignment, are married, have entered into a civil partnership or have a disability.

With cases of harassment, while the College encourages employees who believe they are being harassed to notify the offender (by words or by conduct) that his or her behaviour is unwelcome, the College also recognises that actual or perceived power and status disparities may make such confrontation impractical.

Reporting complaints

All allegations of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The College will ensure that there are no barriers which might inhibit any individual from lodging a complaint against any alleged contravention of the policy. There are two strands for the resolution of problems, one formal and the other informal.

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 as part of reporting on all complaints.

Written details of Aquinas College complaints procedure may be obtained from the Principal's PA at the College.