

## **Governor report, Autumn 2023. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. 9.10.2023**

At the meeting: Isobel Anderson: Governor, Pam Walker: Chair of Governors, Paula Cummings: Headteacher, Gill Finch: Schools' Equalities NCC

### **What does the Equality Act 2010 mean for governors?**

Section 85 of the Equality Act 2010 states that school governing bodies carry the responsibility for ensuring that their school meets the requirements of equality legislation. This means that governing bodies must:

- Ensure the school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that its employees do not carry out unlawful discriminatory actions or behaviour
- Support and guide the school to have “due regard” for equality in all its functions
- Ensure the school complies with two “specific duties.”

The Act states that the “responsible body” is the governing body or the local authority for maintained schools in England and Wales.

Schools have two specific duties, which both came into effect on 6 April 2012:

- To publish equality information which shows compliance with the duty (at least annually)
- To prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives that will address principal equality challenges (at least every four years).

### **Protected characteristics:**

- age.
- gender reassignment.
- sexual orientation
- being married or in a civil partnership.
- being pregnant or on maternity leave.
- disability.
- race including nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- religion or belief.
- sex

### **The current reporting cycle for equality objectives is 2021-2025.**

In line with the government guidance, our school's published information has recently been refreshed (January 2023). This statement describes the ways in which the school seeks to foster good relations, advance equality of opportunity and eliminate harassment and victimisation.

## **Current equality objectives at Cambo 2021-25**

We discussed the school's progress towards meeting equality objectives which are: learning about life in modern Britain and helping children and families to develop resilience in the post-Covid context through the statutory and non-statutory elements of the revised programme of study for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE).

### **Objective 1: Preparation for life in modern Britain**

We discussed the impact of the work the school prioritises to help children to know more about and articulate protected characteristics; how they confidently speak about the need to challenge racism, and how important it is to introduce and develop concepts of inequality, marginalisation and inequality in rural contexts like Cambo, even if children have limited opportunities to experience them.

During Black History Month in October 2023, children have learned about and engaged in discussions about significant and current events such as the conflict in Israel, the historical impact of societies where groups have been marginalised and experienced discrimination

It is the ambition that children from Cambo do not only want to understand modern Britain but want to play their part in shaping it. They learn to live sustainably (there is no stigma at all to wearing preloved uniform; families see it as reducing waste). The school's trip to London is an opportunity to visit parliament and understand democratic decision making. There are no financial barriers to children and families participating in enrichment and visits during their time at Cambo.

Cultural capital is promoted as the essential knowledge, and standard reference points, that we want all children to have. Research indicates that children will find life more challenging without adequate cultural capital, from everyday social interactions to future job interviews.

If children come to school with a poorer vocabulary, less knowledge, limited experiences and a poorer understanding of how to behave in the school setting, they are already at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

Therefore, helping all children to develop their cultural capital is a matter of equality and social justice.

When our children transition to Chantry Middle School, we always hear that they are caring, considerate and thoughtful, but they also report back that they find transition to a larger school frustrating in some respects; they are used to having a voice and influence at Cambo.

Some of the ways we identified to strengthen the work of the school in achieving Objective 1 (Preparing children for life in modern Britain) include:

- A staff CPD update about changing language and best practice in discussing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Autumn 2013

- Reinvigorate the school's commitment to and participation in global learning by obtaining a partner school and participating in reciprocal visits and shared learning through UK German Connection funded projects.
- Challenge the inequalities faced by rural families by continuing to be an informal 'hub' working closely with community partner organisations to challenge fuel and food insecurity, problems of isolation, worklessness, emotional health and wellbeing challenges, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, lack of public transport, amenities beyond the school day for children, loneliness and the cost-of-living crisis. All of these affect children's ability to learn and thrive.
- Ensure that the RE curriculum that teaches about world religions in context is fully covered by the Jigsaw curriculum that we use.

## **Objective 2: Advancing equality of opportunity; new, statutory aspects of the PSHE curriculum and the Covid context.**

This objective was originally set in 2020 when the anticipated, new statutory elements of Relationships Education (including learning about different families and tolerance and mutual respect for LGBT+ identities) were being introduced. Incorporated in this objective was a further focus on health education and part of the compulsory RSHE curriculum. It has been widely reported that in most schools in England, attendance has not returned to pre-Covid levels and there is an emotional health crisis among many children.

Children in Cambo have made a good recovery. Children achieve a good level of development in EYFS, with only 4% achieving lower than age-related expectations (which can be explained).

Much of this very reassuring picture is attributable to the size of the school; a small school is a very nurturing place. Pupils are used to being listened to and heard. Activities such as yoga are not only therapeutic and teaching self-regulation, but also offer a vehicle for consensual language to be modelled and practiced. 'Please may I touch your back?'

As a headteacher, Paula is insightful and ambitious for the children, staff and families; she wants the wider Personal Development curriculum to underpin children's character education, their values and the ethos of the school, however this learning also needs to be sandwiched into a very full curriculum. Alongside LGBT+ inclusion, we have a wider agenda about safe and respectful relationships (misogyny, the influence of online role models, e-safety etc). This is currently addressed in a skilful and ambitious way.

Schools have a responsibility to teach about protected characteristics, and it is possible that children might even be too polite or careful about the language they use if they were to be asked who in society is more vulnerable to and likely to experience discrimination or harassment? This leads us back to the importance of ensuring that staff confidently use the current language of diverse, intersecting identities in Britain today.

Actions to achieve this objective by 2025.

- The 'new' RHE policy is 3 years old now. We have a legal duty to review and seek parental views about it. We are not restricted in the same way as we were in 2020 to carrying out this review remotely. We can invite parents to school (attendance is optional) and discuss any of the aspects of the curriculum that might be contentious (using anatomically correct language for body parts) or unclear (what is a spiral curriculum? What does that look like in practice?).
- Consider how staff teach about the protected characteristics, and whether children are secure in their knowledge about who might be more vulnerable to unfair treatment, and about the role of the active bystander.
- Ensure that staff are confident and feel empowered and supported to talk about and use the language of EDI.