



# **MAHARISHI SCHOOL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

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APPROVED			
REVIEW DATE			
SIGNED PRINCIPAL		PRINT NAME	
SIGNED  CHAIR OF  GOVERNORS		PRINT  NAME	

### **Overview:**

*"Education systems have two important functions in preparing young people for their society. First, schools transmit cultures and values to the young, thereby seeking to pass on the best of what has been inherited from the past. Secondly, schools question existing values so that the young can be better prepared for a world that is changing and in which new attitudes, values and skills become essential."* (David Hargreaves, Professor of Education and Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge.)

We must create an environment, which promotes understanding of the principles and practices of equality and justice.

The promotion of equal opportunities is at the centre of good education practice. The measures that will best promote the interests of minority groups are the same as those that will raise the standard of education generally. Equal opportunities should be manifested in the practices and policies of all departments of the school.

Within the whole school community, we aim to promote a positive self-image and mutual respect. We recognise that, in society, the needs of specific groups can sometimes be overlooked. Equal opportunities education therefore involves a holistic attitude to life.

Equal opportunities will only be achieved by the commitment we put into implementing this policy through regular monitoring, evaluation and review. The promotion of equal opportunities should be central to our regular process of monitoring, evaluation and review.

Educational judgements have to be made. We could not be said to be taking our own or other cultures seriously if we unthinkingly accept all aspects of our own culture or cultures, which are different from our own. Rather we should be developing in youngsters the ability to deal with the diversity of human ideas, achievements and experience so that they are able to work out their merits or otherwise on justifiable grounds.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Harmony can exist in diversity
- Everyone in the Maharishi School can develop the understanding and experience of, '*The World is my family*'.
- We value each member of the school community as an individual.
- We must not define individuals in terms of labels.
- We must ensure that ability/disability is not used as a term of abuse.
- Issues relating to ability/disability should be investigated in positive terms.
- We must also be aware of the ways in which institutional and textbook language can discriminate.
- Individual needs can take many forms and be met in a variety of ways. We should always remember that a person has the right to be treated so that they retain their dignity.

### **Equal Opportunities: Race:**

(Please also see the Maharishi Free School policy on Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy)

Every member of the school's community will be involved in combating prejudice and stereotyping.

The UK is a multi-ethnic society. Teaching will reflect this fact and attempt to break down negative stereotypes, which different groups may have of each other. All pupils need to be made aware of the diversity of cultures in our society, the particular contribution different groups are making to the overall culture and their achievements in all areas.

Positive responses to cultural and linguistic diversity are important but these are not enough on their own. We will condemn all expressions of a racist attitude, either through remarks or conduct and we will ensure practices and procedures are fair to all.

Racial harassment is an extreme form of racist behaviour, which will be positively discouraged in the school. The issues of racism and its effects must be addressed.

## **Equal Opportunities: Gender & Sexual Orientation:**

We are committed to eliminating sexual discrimination and to increasing the equality of opportunity between the sexes for pupils and staff. Both sexes are affected by sexism but women are most likely to be disadvantaged. For example, females should not be seen as submissive or passive; women's achievements will be recognised and promoted.

Parental roles will be shown as a shared endeavour between men and women.

We will work to combat stereotyping and prejudice, patronising behaviour and bias, including discrimination and bullying arising from sexual orientation or homophobia. Sexual harassment is an extreme form of sexist behaviour, which will be positively discouraged within the school.

Any student who is pregnant at the Maharishi Free School will be supported using the multi-agency support systems. This category of student will be subject to the non-discriminatory policies which are in place.

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) (The policy document about Safeguarding informs all aspects of SRE.) The Mentoring system (monitoring both academic progress and pastoral concerns) in the secondary school enables Mentors to address any issues of sex or relationships with pupils; the Class Teacher undertakes this role in the primary school.

## **Equal Opportunities: Social Class:**

We are aware of the relationship between teacher expectation and pupils' achievement and oppose low expectations.

We will challenge stereotyped images of children from different backgrounds and social and economic groups.

We recognise that traditionally, children from particular social and economic groups have been disadvantaged in terms of their educational achievement.

## **Meeting Individual Needs:**

DISABILITY [ref: Equality Act 2010; Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 etc: "the acts"]

We recognise that people with disabilities have equal rights in society and an equal contribution to make. However there are many areas in which people are denied their rights; this may be through poorly designed buildings, which deny physical access, or through ignorance or prejudice, which fails to recognise the rights of an individual.

We must therefore aim to ensure we create easy access to the building and ease of movement within it. Sometimes the greatest problem for a disabled person is not their disability but the attitude of those around them, however well meaning.

In dealing with disability in the school we must break down the barriers these attitudes create and provide positive images of disability.

We must promote opportunities for disabled people to participate fully in all aspects of the school community.

### **DISADVANTAGE:**

In the School we must recognise disadvantage in a variety of less obvious ways. These disadvantages could be: physical, sensory, social, emotional; financial; from previous educational experiences; and by having learning difficulties, for example.

This may affect:

- i. Self concept
- ii. The ability to mature and develop
- iii. Access to the curriculum The ability to take advantage of the available opportunities
- iv. Academic success
- v. The ability to do homework
- vi. Peer group acceptance
- vii. Appearance

It may result in stereotyping, labelling, disruptive or anti-social behaviour. It may be a short or long-term problem which may affect pupils learning or prevent them from participating in all aspects of school life.

The extent to which these difficulties are allowed to interfere with the pupils learning depends on the way in which we in the school community respond in terms of resources, curriculum and the ethos we create.

- We must recognise that people have a right to expect tolerance and understanding, whether they have a temporary difficulty or a long term problem.
- We must recognise that any member of the school community may need support, for example because of bereavement, stress or problems with relationships.
- We must minimise the features of the school, which may cause or exacerbate difficulties and take positive action where possible.
- We must avoid the "self-fulfilling prophecy".

### **Learning Difficulties:**

Difficulties in learning affect us all at different times. Some pupils experience persistent difficulties in particular subjects or in developing key skills such as reading, spelling and writing. Some pupils experience difficulties in academic learning of a more general kind.

- We must monitor so that all pupils receive their entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- We must strive to meet individual learning needs.
- We must create a community where academic and non-academic achievements are valued equally.
- We must avoid unfair or damaging comparisons by recognising the different Capabilities And Starting Points Of Individuals.

### **Equal Opportunities in Practice:**

Dealing with the issues

In order to achieve the aims of our policy, we will:

- Treat all staff, pupils and visitors to the school with dignity.
- Respond positively to ethnic diversity.
- Regularly review materials and practices in order to eliminate bias or discrimination.
- Deal with all discriminatory incidents whether physical or verbal in accordance with the policy guidelines.
- Encourage open discussion about living in a multi-ethnic society and this should include discussions about the cause of racism.
- Reflect the different backgrounds of the pupils in all aspects of school life.

### **The School Ethos and Community:**

The Maharishi School must reflect the ideal of, '***The world is my family***'.

The physical environment

Our physical environment can reflect racism by graffiti in and around the building, the absence of displays reflecting the multi-cultural society in which we live.

Alternatively, the elements that together make up the ethos and climate of the school can give a positive message, which is clearly opposed to racism.

Cumulatively, positive attention can contribute significantly to the well-being, security, confidence and identity of all youngsters. Our awareness of such issues will ensure that:

- Assemblies and other group meetings should consistently emphasise the pluralist nature of our society and underline our aims of equality and justice;
- Displays in classrooms will have a similar emphasis;

- Although it may only be relevant for small numbers of youngsters, school rules and regulations should show respect for cultural practices relating, for example, to dress and diet.

### **The Curriculum:**

The curriculum, through whole school policies, will:

- Create an understanding of different environments, societies, systems and cultures across the world.
- Study the political, psychological, social and economic reasons for racism, equality and justice and consider their present day effects in this country and the world.
- Encourage pupils to recognise that each society has its own values and traditions, which will be considered in the context of that society.
- Study scientific achievements outside the western world.
- Develop the concepts and skills, which will allow all pupils to participate actively in society.
- Explore and share the ideas, opinions and interests, which derive from a broad range of cultural experience.

### **Classroom Management:**

As part of the regular process of evaluation and review, we should critically review our teaching styles and materials.

We must be aware of the tendency of boys to dominate classroom space, discussion and the teacher's time and take account of these tendencies when organising our classroom work. We should attempt to counteract the findings of classroom research which shows that it is:

- Normal for the teacher to ignore the girls for long periods of time, but not the boys;
- Normal for boys to call out, move from their seats, push each other;
- Normal for girls to be addressed collectively, boys by their individual names;
- Normal for boys to dominate classroom talk;
- Normal for boys to talk 'rough' and girls to talk 'soft'.

### **Assessment and Achievement**

We must ensure that we acknowledge and give credit for the full range of personal achievement. We must give status to any achievement, which a child wishes to bring to his or her teacher or mentor. For example, equal value must be given to activities traditionally undertaken by girls.

We must ensure that the same criteria, when used in reports and profiles, applies to both girls' and boys' assessment.

We must ensure that behaviour is not determined by female and male stereotypes.

Similarly, we must ensure that we do not discriminate when using words to describe the strengths and weaknesses of girls and boys.

We must be careful to encourage both sexes in all subject areas.