
Queen Elizabeth's School

ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth's School believes that excellence is enabled through recognising the value of every individual. The School aims to create an environment that respects the diversity of staff and pupils from all different backgrounds and allows them to achieve their full potential, to contribute fully, and to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the School.

The School also works to ensure equality of opportunity, supporting those with additional needs and affirming a meritocratic approach to admissions, recruitment and reward.

The School takes seriously its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, complying with its requirements to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This report sets out some of the steps taken by the School over the past year in support of the Equality Act 2010 and provides an update with regards to the fulfilment of the School's own specific equality objectives, as confirmed by the Governing Body in February 2019.

To gain a fuller understanding of the School's approach and procedures with regards to equalities, this report should be read in conjunction with, among other documents, the School's Equal Opportunities Policy, SEND Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Bullying Policy, as well as procedures for admissions, recruitment, performance management, and disciplinary matters.

Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty

- The School's Equal Opportunities Policy was reviewed during the spring term to ensure compliance and to add further details with regards to the arrangements in place, including with reference to supporting pupils with disabilities, promoting gender equality, accommodating recognised religious observance, and the potential support mechanisms that would be required should the School have a transgendered pupil.
- A new set of equality objectives were set by governors, looking to build upon the School's positive culture of equality, diversity and inclusion, whilst seeking to address any attainment gaps between pupils with protected characteristics and those without, in the context of very high achievement across the School population.
- Related policies were updated to further promote equality and diversity and to give further scope for reasonable adjustments to be made, as required in particular cases, to provisions such as those of the Uniform Policy in order that no one would be discriminated against on the basis of a protected characteristic.

Queen Elizabeth's School ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

- A new Accessibility Plan has been prepared for review by the Governing Body, setting out what actions are being taken to support the accessibility of the curriculum, the wider QE experience and the site for those with barriers and additional needs. Procedures relating to the circumstances under which candidates can use word processors in public examinations have also been reviewed, to ensure both that pupils with disabilities are able to fulfil their potential and that the integrity of the exam system is upheld.
- Reasonable adjustments were implemented with respect to the entrance examination for candidates with SEND to support the meritocratic process, including one-to-one and small group invigilation, with staff apprised of individual needs.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions given to pupils for using language with racial or homophobic connotations increased in 2018-19 (use of homophobic language stable at one exclusion; use of racially offensive language up from two to five), showing that this is being taken very seriously and being pursued through the provisions of the Pupil Discipline Policy, but that continued work is needed to reduce incidence.
- Equality was promoted through the curriculum, notably Personal Development Time – the pastoral curriculum delivered in form time and year group assemblies.
- The PDT curriculum was supported by input from external speakers and organisations, for example: the charity Wise Thoughts who delivered an Upper School assembly and workshop on LGBTQ+ matters; Stonewall who provided role model speakers to us as a Stonewall Champion School; Tender who explored gender equality and domestic abuse; Positive Voices who dealt with the challenges and stigma around HIV; poet Anthony Anaxagorou (OE) who explored issues of gender and respect for others and what is meant by 'being a man'; and Amy Marren (Paralympian) who spoke about dealing with disability and discrimination.
- The peer mentoring system, which covers both academic and pastoral issues, saw older boys support their younger peers with a range of concerns, including some which touched upon anxieties connected to identity and equality.
- Through their charitable and voluntary service activities, pupils in the Sixth Form advanced equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations in the local community, for example by supporting people with disabilities in healthcare and educational settings.
- Participation in the National Citizens Service 'The Challenge' saw pupils working in common purpose for community benefit with peers from diverse backgrounds.
- Academic symposia held jointly with local girls' schools (North London Collegiate and Henrietta Barnett School) fostered respect between boys and girls.
- Staff training included exploring issues of equality, with dedicated discussion at the pastoral INSET day, leading to ongoing work within the Year Heads' group and tutor team meetings.
- The School counsellor, a service delivered in partnership with local charity Rephael House, increased her time spent at the School to a full day per week (up from half a day per week), enabling her to engage with more pupils, and run a drop-in clinic at break and lunchtimes to help triage those feeling in need of support. All those involved in the counselling service saw improvements in their condition, as measured by CORE clinical analysis, each moving from being above the clinical threshold to below it over the course of their therapy.

Queen Elizabeth's School ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

Our equality objectives

In this section work towards meeting the School's five established equality objectives will be highlighted. Progress towards achieving these aims will be regularly monitored and reported at least annually. The following objectives were set by the Governing Body in February 2019.

1. Reduce any attainment gap between pupils of different ethnicities in English (and other essay-writing subjects), relating to around half of all pupils not having English as their first language.

Approaching 92% of the current School pupil population are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and around 45% are advanced bilingual learners, where English is not their first language. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is incredibly high, with 79.4% of GCSEs taken in summer 2019 awarded 9 or 8 (the equivalent of an A* under the old system). The spread in results is wider in English than in many other subjects (notably Maths and the Sciences), with fewer pupils obtaining the highest grade 9 and more gaining grade 6 or below than in most other subjects. It should be noted, though, that the most recent confirmed data now indicates that pupils with English as an additional language achieved and progressed to an equal or greater degree than those with English as a first language at GCSE in 2017/18. Work has nevertheless been undertaken to provide additional support in order to ensure equal opportunity for high attainment.

- The introduction of an extra English lesson per week, allowing increased curricular time for the development of advanced literacy and written communication skills. Specifically, in Year 11 all pupils have an extra 35 minute period (6 periods rather than 5 periods) and in Year 10 pupils in sets 7-8 English have an additional double lesson (so 7 periods compared to 5 periods for those in sets 1-6);
- A focus upon the accurate use of specific and technical terminology (known as disciplinary literacy) in lessons and assessed work in the new Lower School schemes of work, as well as at GCSE and A-level, across all subject areas, as part of a wider drive on literacy;
- A focus on literacy in senior staff reviews of learning and lesson walks;
- Additional intervention classes for pupils in Year 11 not on track to make the expected progress or attainment level in English, supported by the work of subject clinics available to pupils of all ages across all subjects.

2. Reduce the attainment gap between those pupils in receipt of pupil premium and their cohort at large at GCSE.

Disadvantaged pupils also perform very highly at the School. Performance data published by the DfE for Attainment 8 and Progress 8 for our pupil premium cohort (based upon the grades achieved at GCSE in summer 2019) are 79.1 and 0.54 respectively (the attainment figure being an increase upon the 76.4 achieved in 2018). This does, though, remain lower than the equivalent scores for the year group at large, with attainment at 84.4 and progress at 1.08. Fuller information on how those pupils who qualify for pupil premium are supported is set out in the annual Pupil Premium report, but strategies have included:

Queen Elizabeth's School ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

- Reducing the size of form groups in the Upper School, to enable more targeted and bespoke support;
- The provision of one-to-one, small group, and peer-to-peer tutoring, to give additional support to those at risk of falling behind in relation to their peers;
- Engaging specialist support, including a professional counselling service, for those pupils with social or emotional problems likely to impede their progress;
- A dedicated fund to enable disadvantaged pupils to participate in the full range of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, providing equal opportunity to accrue their benefit;
- Enhanced use of digital technology to support learning and parental communication.

3. Reduce further the incidence of the use of pejorative language by pupils in relation to race, gender and sexual orientation.

The number of cases involving racist, sexist or homophobic language remain low; however, continued effort is required to eliminate such instances. This year:

- School policies have been updated to ensure that the use of pejorative language is explicitly referenced as being in scope of the Bullying Policy and is also dealt with in the Equal Opportunities Policy;
- The Personal Development Time programme has sought to increase understanding and foster good relations, as outlined in other sections of this report;
- The use of language has been specifically considered as part of the PDT programme, supported by special assemblies looking at LGBT identities, attitudes towards indigenous peoples (and the construction of racial difference), stereotyping, and women's equality.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions increased from the previous academic year for the use of language with racial connotations (from two to five), underlining the School's zero-tolerance approach to such incidents.

4. Further foster tolerance, understanding and good relations between those in the School community with a protected characteristic and those without through the curriculum and pastoral support system.

Matters of equality are considered across the scope of the academic and pastoral curricular, notably through the Personal Development Time programme. The PDT curriculum has undergone a process of review and revision, so that:

- In Year 7 themes include diversity and respect, and bullying (including cyber-bullying, racism and homophobia);
- In Year 8 work includes the dangers of stereotyping, issues around consent, and being a role model to others;
- In Year 9 equality is studied alongside identity and sexuality, healthy relationships, and pornography and respect;
- In Year 10 there is additional focus on prejudice and tolerance, press freedoms, and an assembly on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);

Queen Elizabeth's School ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

- In the Upper School (Years 11-13) there is further exploration of personal identity, modern relationships, respectful relationships, marriage and the law, body image, successful mental wellbeing, and equality in the UK.

5. Increase pupil consultation and leadership on equalities issues, enabling them to better promote equality, diversity and inclusion among their peers.

In a diverse community it is important that pupils have the opportunity to be heard on issues of equality, but also for them to take responsibility for their own conduct and the example they set to their peers. Whether through the prefect system, vertical tutoring, leadership of extra-curricular activities, or just in their visibility to others, pupils can have a significant impact upon the attitudes and experiences of others. In support of this objective:

- Issues relating to equality and identity were on the agenda for the Year 7-11 pupil conference and formed much of the focus of the Sixth Form conference, through which pupils are able to provide feedback and suggestions to the School's Senior Leadership – with prior discussion having taken place in form groups in preparation for these events;
- Three Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Ambassadors were appointed to the senior prefect team for the first time, tasked with promoting these values throughout the School and supporting awareness raising around issues such as mental health, sexuality and gender identity. The ambassadors have instituted a dedicated equalities noticeboard, held competitions reflecting upon diversity and equality, helped co-ordinate celebration of occasions such as International Women's Day, Pride, and Black History month, and supplied tailored learning resources delivered across the year groups in PDT during Pride month;
- A Diversity Society, run by Sixth Form students but open to pupils of all ages, has been established and meets regularly at lunchtimes to support open discussion, greater understanding and good relations.

Review:

This report on equalities at Queen Elizabeth's School was prepared in October 2019 and progress will be reviewed by the Governing Body again in November 2020, in line with a requirement for annual reporting.