



Protected Characteristics and Equality Law

The Equality Act came into force from October 2010 providing a modern, single legal framework with clear, streamlined law to more effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination.

It stated that it is against the law (UK) to discriminate against anyone because of:

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

These are called 'Protected Characteristics', and schools have a duty of care to protect all pupils from discrimination or harassment.

The Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) can help pupils understand and promote these characteristics more fully and in a child-centred way.

Some examples include:

- focusing on celebrating differences (learning about diversity, such as disability, racism, power, friendships, and conflict; children learn to accept everyone's right to 'difference');
- looking at diverse topics such as families, friendships, pets and animals, and love and loss – all of which can help to deliver the vital messages behind the Equalities Act. They have the chance to explore roles and responsibilities in families, and look at stereotypes;
- Safeguarding and keeping children safe; this links to cyber safety and social networking, as well as attraction and assertiveness; children learn how to deal with conflict, their own strengths and self-esteem.

Celebrating Protected Characteristics

The school fosters a culture that empowers pupils to challenge their misconceptions and build their knowledge of others around them. Young people are naturally curious and many who have protected characteristics may feel anxious about sharing their

experiences. At the heart of our school culture is the notion of allowing everyone in the school community to be themselves. This creates a culture of tolerance and acceptance, celebrating others has become part of the ethos of our school and is embedded in all that we do.

All lessons are delivered in an age-appropriate and stage-appropriate way so that they meet pupils' needs and can help them understand the wider world. The intended outcomes are:

- improve pupils' mental health, well-being, safety, academic outcomes and breadth of future career choices, as well as to prepare them for diversity in wider society;
- pupils having broadened views – as a result of knowing more, pupils said they had become more accepting;
- preparing them for their future and to be responsible citizens in this ever-changing world.

The school is not required to teach about all the Protected Characteristics in every year group, however, the school has an inclusive and accepting school culture as a necessary condition for this and therefore the curriculum is planned and delivered so that children develop age-appropriate knowledge and understanding during their time at the school. The message of acceptance comes out strongly in school culture, teaching, extra-curricular activities and pastoral support. As stated in the DfE's statutory guidance, teaching on these matters should be integrated appropriately into the curriculum, rather than addressed separately or in one-off lessons.