

Equality, Inclusion and Community Cohesion

Briefing for senior staff and governors

This briefing is part of a toolkit to support schools to implement the requirements of equality legislation.

The toolkit also contains:

- An overview of the toolkit. It would be helpful to read this first as it explains how the toolkit came about and the purpose of the different parts of the toolkit
- A framework for a Single Equality Scheme (SES)
- Flowchart to develop a SES
- A Governors' audit tool
- A summary of equality legislation
- Answers to FAQs - Frequently Asked Questions

The toolkit will help schools to

- understand the requirements of equality legislation
- identify their own key priorities for promoting equality, inclusion and community cohesion
- build on the good practice they have already made
- develop their own SES

What are the legal duties?

Schools have statutory duties to promote race, disability and gender equality, and a duty to promote community cohesion. Schools must also not discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation, age or religion and belief. The duties cover staff, learners and people using the services of the

school such as parents. For further information, see the toolkit's 'summary of equality legislation'

What should schools have in place?

At the very least, schools must have **either**, a three-year

a) race equality policy and action plan, accessibility plan, disability equality scheme and action plan, gender equality scheme and action plan, equal opportunities policy that covers sexual orientation, age and religion or belief, and a strategy for promoting community cohesion (in the form of a policy, plan, or working group for example) **Or**

b) a three-year Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan that incorporates all the above policies, schemes and plans

- What does your school have in place?

What is the advantage of a Single Equality Scheme?

A Single Equality Scheme (SES) will help schools to take a more holistic and streamlined approach to equality, inclusion and community cohesion. In anticipation of a forthcoming Single Equality Act, Hampshire County Council has developed a SES and advises schools to take a similar approach. The 'flowchart' in the toolkit

provides a summary of the stages involved in developing a SES.

- Have you thought about setting up a working party to help develop your school SES?

Do you have an 'exemplar' Single Equality Scheme?

The 'framework' in the toolkit gives schools the headings they should consider. It also provides either model statements to adopt, or prompts to help the school to tailor the Scheme to their own context.

We hope schools find the framework helpful in developing their own Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Demonstrating the impact will be far more significant, however. Delivering priorities and achieving improvement will be the real test of progress

- What have you already achieved in promoting equality, inclusion and community cohesion?
- What are your specific priorities for the next three years? Are these an integral part of the School Improvement Plan?

Why should we take these duties seriously?

All good schools respect and celebrate diversity, striving to achieve the very best opportunities for all their young people, irrespective of background, identity or circumstance, within a culture of respect.

Implementing the requirements of equality legislation will help schools to

- create a diverse learning community where there is a shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference

- deliver more effective education, responsive to the needs of individual learners
- raise standards and achieve key outcomes, such as Every Child Matters, and personalised learning
- promote a greater knowledge and understanding of equality and human rights, to the benefit society at large

Ofsted and the Equality and Human Rights Commission will monitor how well a school is meeting its duties

What is the role of governors?

The governing body carries the responsibility for ensuring that their school meets the requirements of equality legislation. They must ensure that schools have in place and are effectively implementing robust equality policies, schemes and action plans.

- Have governors used the 'audit tool' in the toolkit to help identify the progress their school has already made, and further action their school intends to take to promote equality, inclusion and community cohesion?

What if I have further questions?

You might find the answer to your question in the toolkit's 'Frequently Asked Questions'. Alternatively, further information can be found at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk> <http://www.governor.net.co.uk> www.equalityhumanrights.com