

Promoting equality in schools: Equality Monitoring, Setting and Achieving Equality Objectives

It is vital that school leaders are measuring how well schools are doing with regards to promoting equality, that they are identifying areas of need and then developing strategies in order to take an informed approach to promoting equality and eradicate the barriers, which prevent us from creating inclusive settings where everyone feels safe and able to achieve.

The public sector equality duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) states that:

All schools have a requirement to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

There are two specific duties placed on schools as part of this general duty. They are:

- To publish information which shows they have due regard for equalities, as defined by the Act
- To publish at least one equality objective.

Schools are expected to show proportionality in meeting these duties. More is expected from a large school than a small one.

The duties are also flexible, which means that individual schools are able to set their own objectives depending on their own individual context.

Publishing information which shows a due regard for equalities

Schools are expected to publish information every year, which shows that they are paying due regard to their duties to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

This information should be published through the usual channels that the school uses for communicating with the public. For example: the school website, school newsletters and notice boards.

Collecting this information is not only a way to demonstrate that the school takes equality seriously, but is also vital in order to be able to identify areas that the school is doing well and to identify areas for improvement, which will be used as evidence when setting equality objectives.

What kind of information should the school be collecting and publishing?

There is no set rule about the kind of information that the school should collect, but the government has stated that at a minimum, public bodies should provide demographic information about their service users and show that they are aware of different outcomes and inequalities amongst them.

Some examples of information that the school could collect, broken down by race, religion or belief, sex, disability and, where relevant, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and age, are:

- School admissions
- Pupil attainment and progress
- Prejudice-related incidents
- Sanctions (including exclusion)
- Staff recruitment and selection
- Promotions
- Professional development opportunities

The requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 still apply, so it is not necessary to publish all information. For example, schools should not publish information which enables individual pupils or members of staff to be identified.

In addition to this information, schools should include statements about equality in school documents. An overarching equality policy is good practice and this should be linked to other relevant policies and documents. For example, anti-bullying policy, SEND policy, school evaluation framework and prospectus.

When introducing a new policy, due regard should be shown for equality issues and a record kept of the analysis made.

How can we collect data?

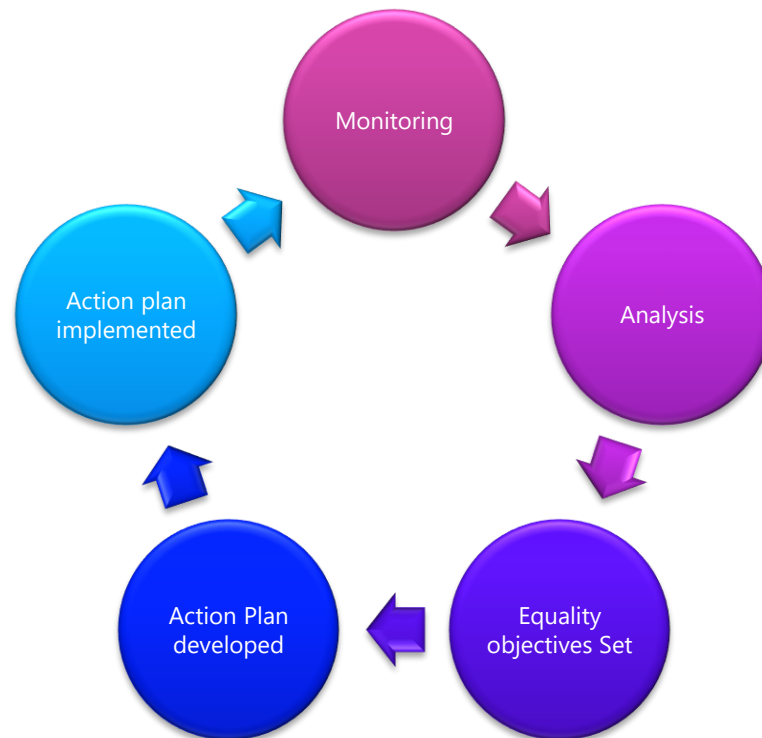
Equality monitoring forms are a really important way of collecting information about staff and service users. However, people are often very sceptical about why this data is being collected. People are often worried that organisations are trying to label them, invade their privacy or plan to treat them badly depending on the information that they include. This can lead to a refusal to complete the form, or attempts to undermine the data collection.

Therefore it is really important that any equality monitoring is accompanied with an explanation of why the data is being collected, how it will be used and provides an opportunity for people to talk to a member of staff if they have concerns.

Equality monitoring is only one way of collecting information, which will help to evidence how the school is meeting its equality duties and where more work needs to be done. Other important methods of collecting information include:

- Records of prejudice-related incidents and how these have been dealt with
- Surveys of pupils, parents and carers and staff
- Focus groups and consultations with pupils, parents and carers and the wider community

Setting Equality Objectives



The Equality Act 2010 states that schools must publish at least one equality objective. This may be suitable for a very small primary school, but larger schools would need to identify more objectives in order to be demonstrating that they are meeting their equality duties.

What makes a good equality objective?

Good equality objectives:

- Are outcome focussed
- Are aimed at eliminating discrimination, narrowing gaps in attainment or fostering good relations
- Are based on equality monitoring data, consultations with parents and carers, pupils, staff and governors
- Are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART)
- Name the protected characteristic with which they are concerned
- Are closely linked with the school improvement plan as a whole

Action Planning

It is not enough to simply set an equality objective. If any progress is to be made in achieving the objective, it needs to be backed up by an action plan which outlines the steps that the school is going to take in order to achieve this objective.

Things to consider:

- What relevant data do we have?
- Who should we consult?
- What are the main things we will do in order to meet this objective?
- What will be our success indicators?
- When do we expect to see signs of progress or success?
- Who will be responsible for ensuring the objective is achieved?
- What training do our staff need?
- How can we find out what has worked well in other schools?
- How much will it cost?
- What problems might arise, and how will we deal with them?
- Who may be opposed to what we are doing? How can we engage them?

It is good practice to have a named member of staff in charge of equalities and in charge of ensuring that action plans are implemented and obstacles identified. A member of the governors should also have a brief for equalities and be overseeing the progress made.

References:

DfE (2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

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<http://www.insted.co.uk/specific-duties.pdf>

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011) Equality Objectives and the Equality Duty: a guide for public authorities:

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