



EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS PACK

The information below provides an introduction to equality, a template policy for parent groups and health checks.

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With support from Scottish Government, Connect has created the Equality and Equity Toolkit for use by school staff, parent groups, pupils, parents and the wider community. You can find the Toolkit here <https://education.gov.scot/resources/equality-and-equity-toolkit/> and additional case studies are here <https://connect.scot/resources/equality-and-equity-toolkit-and-case-studies>

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO EQUALITY & FAIRNESS: EVERYONE MATTERS

With support from Scottish Government, Connect has created the Equality and Equity Toolkit for use by school staff, parent groups, pupils, parents and the wider community. You can find the Toolkit here <https://education.gov.scot/resources/equality-and-equity-toolkit/> and additional case studies here <https://connect.scot/resources/equality-and-equity-toolkit-and-case-studies>

Why should we think about Equality and Fairness?

Parent Councils (PCs)/Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)/Parent Staff Associations (PSAs) work in schools with families from diverse backgrounds. An Equality & Fairness Policy will show people your group is thinking about its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and is aware of the need to involve parents of all backgrounds in the school community and children's learning.

An Equality & Fairness Policy also shows your PC and PTA/PSA respects everyone and believes all families have something to bring.

What is the Equality Act?

The Act legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

What does the Equality Act say?

There are nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

A person could make a complaint if they believe they have been subject to less favourable treatment because of any of these characteristics.

As well as the protected characteristics, Parent Councils and PTA/PSAs should be aware they should try to represent *all* those parents and carers in the school community. Other areas you may want to consider are:

- Those families in poverty or facing financial difficulties
- People who don't read or write well
- Separated/divorced parents or people who are sharing parenting
- Those families with a parent in prison
- Parents/carers with a child with additional support needs
- Black and ethnic minority families
- Families with English as an additional language
- Travelling families
- LGBTQ+ parents/carers
- Armed Forces families
- Kinship, foster, adoptive parents/carers.

Why should we have an Equality & Fairness Policy?

This would show the Parent Council or PTA/PSA:

- is working to include all the school community
- is aware of diversity
- has respect for all
- believes everyone matters.

What should an Equality & Fairness Policy say?

There is no one single Equality and Fairness Policy that your group can simply download and adopt unchanged, though Connect does have a sample policy to use as a guide. Equality and fairness are more about meeting the general principles rather than having a fixed set of rules. Your Parent Council/committee should be working to make sure it remains open and inclusive for everyone.

Things to consider:

- **Diversity** – does your group try to represent all social groups in the school community?
- **Inclusion** – does your group work to include all types of families in the school?
- **Accessibility** – is your group and its activities, including communication, accessible to all parents/carers?
- **Are your Parent Council/committee members and volunteers aware of your policy?**
- **Constitution** – does your constitution include messages about equality and fairness?
- **Reviewing the policy** – how often will this be done?

EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS TEMPLATE POLICY

Template policy for Parent Councils, Parent Teacher Associations, and Parent Staff Associations

Please refer to the Connect leaflets [A Simple Guide to Equality & Fairness](#) and [Equality and Fairness Glossary](#) before you use this template. You can find a downloadable template at [Equality and fairness policy template](#)

	EXPLANATION
Aims of this Policy	(Name of organisation) is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality and values diversity. (Name of organisation) is committed to ensuring that it does not commit any unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. The aim of this policy is to ensure that everyone involved in the organisation is aware of the statutory requirements of the Equality Act and is mindful of promoting inclusivity and equality.
Statutory obligations	The Equality Act 2010 provides nine 'protected characteristics': 1. Age 2. Disability 3. Gender reassignment 4. Marriage and civil partnership 5. Pregnancy and maternity 6. Race 7. Religion or belief 8. Sex 9. Sexuality (Name of organisation) is committed to the principle that no-one will face discrimination as a result of these or other characteristics.
Other obligations	(Name of organisation) is committed to including and respecting all those in the school community, such as: • Families facing poverty and financial difficulties • People who don't read or write well • Separated/divorced parents or those who share parenting • Those families with a parent in prison

	Kinship, foster or adoptive parents/carers
Policy implementation	In order to meet our responsibilities (insert name of organisation/names of specific individuals or roles) will strive to ensure: - the organisation is accessible to all members of the school community. - no member of the school community is subject to discrimination by those involved with (organisation) - harassment is prevented and that everybody is treated with respect - any complaints received about discrimination or harassment within the group are taken seriously and dealt with fairly
Dealing with complaints	(Name of organisation) will make certain that all complaints are dealt with promptly and efficiently. Connect's <i>Complaints Policy and Policy template</i> can be adopted to ensure clarity and fairness in the process In the event of a complaint being made, the issue will be investigated, and lessons will be drawn from it. In the aftermath of a complaint, (Name of organisation) will ensure that the complainer is not victimised in any way.
Review	This policy will be reviewed every (insert number of years) to ensure it remains up-to-date and is compliant with the law and values of the organisation.
Declaration	I confirm I have read and understood (insert name of organisation)'s Equality & Fairness Policy and will act in accordance to it. I am connected with this organisation in my capacity as a Member of the Parent Council/ committee Volunteer Member of staff Signature: _____ Print name: _____ Date: _____

INCLUSION HEALTH CHECK: EVERYONE IS EQUAL

This exercise will help you identify how inclusive your school community is and will help you identify areas for improvements. We recommend the whole school community works together on this.

Using the tick boxes, mark each one with the following colours:

GREEN: Very well implemented

ORANGE: Good start

RED: Needs improvement

INCLUSION: Everyone is equal	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
In order to represent all families, we survey parents and carers to identify and understand diversity in our school	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council has an up-to-date Equality and Fairness Policy (Connect template policy available)	☐	☐	☐
Our Equality and Fairness Policy is written in a way to make it as accessible as possible to everyone in the school community and is made available to the Parent Forum	☐	☐	☐
The Parent Council works hard to represent all parents and carers in our school eg by having sub-committees, informal or online groups for parents with children with additional support needs, Black and ethnic minority families etc	☐	☐	☐
Our school protects the rights of its volunteers, parents, children and staff	☐	☐	☐
Our school organises events and activities to promote equality and inclusion and to	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Everyone is equal	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
celebrate diversity, eg Black History Month, additional support needs, LGBTQ+, etc			
We respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff and families and are sensitive to religious observances and practices	☐	☐	☐
We work to ensure our families have equal opportunities to access IT facilities because we know some families do not have these at home	☐	☐	☐
Our school and Parent Council work with faith groups and other relevant organisations to help promote diversity	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council organises face-to-face and/or online meetings at different times or with a crèche/funding for babysitters so parents can attend	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council's social and fundraising events are planned and organised in a way that allows every family to access them eg with donations, rather than requiring payment for entry	☐	☐	☐
We organise social events for our school community to celebrate diversity	☐	☐	☐
We share parental concerns around equality and respect with the school and discuss how best to resolve them	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council does not tolerate bullying, harassment and victimisation and this is written into our Code of Conduct (see <i>Connect's Code of Conduct template</i> ,)	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Everyone is equal	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
We have systems in place to make sure any complaints received about discrimination/harassment are taken seriously and dealt with fairly (see <i>Connect's Complaints Policy and Procedure Template</i>)	☐	☐	☐
We work with the school to make sure communication methods and contents work for families	☐	☐	☐
Our fundraising activities take into account those with disabilities, differing religious beliefs and differing lifestyles	☐	☐	☐
Everyone in the school community is treated with respect and compassion	☐	☐	☐
We seek out training opportunities on equality and inclusion as we recognise it is a complex, important sphere and we are always learning	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council organises events and activities to include fathers and other male family members	☐	☐	☐
Kinship carers, grandparents and older people are welcomed into the school and encouraged to volunteer with the Parent Council or PTA/PSA	☐	☐	☐
We make sure our meetings and events are accessible and welcoming to all	☐	☐	☐
We have information for families on support organisations which are relevant to their needs	☐	☐	☐
We understand there may be children/young people who are adopted, fostered, looked after or in care, or who are young	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Everyone is equal	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
carers, and we work with the school and carers to include them			

INCLUSION HEALTH CHECK: SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH MONEY WORRIES

This exercise will help you identify how inclusive your school community is and will help you identify areas for improvements. We recommend the whole school community works together on this. There is a downloadable version of this Health Check at <https://connect.scot/resources/inclusion-health-check-money-worries>

Using the tick boxes, mark each one with the following colours:

GREEN: Very well implemented

ORANGE: Good start

RED: Needs improvement

INCLUSION: Support for families with money worries	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
Our school community recognises financial hardship in its Equality and Fairness policy and approaches; this is also considered in all our policy-making and as we plan our activities	☐	☐	☐
The school and Parent Council/PTA are aware of the challenges some families face financially when trying to engage with their child's learning, and work together to address these and signpost families to support and information	☐	☐	☐
Our school community always considers the costs of events and activities and makes sure all families can join in when planning these	☐	☐	☐
Our school community has a school uniform policy which is inclusive and responsive to families and children's needs eg families in financial hardship, children with additional support needs	☐	☐	☐
Our school holds additional equipment, uniform, PE kit, etc so all children and young people can participate	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Support for families with money worries	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
Our school and Parent Council signpost families to local uniform banks and exchanges (see Connect's webpage of links https://connect.scot/resources/school-uniform-and-clothing-banks)	☐	☐	☐
Our school community has a supportive behaviour policy which recognises that irregular school attendance or challenging behaviour may be a sign of hardship and family stress and has appropriate dialogue and positive relationship-based approaches to families in place	☐	☐	☐
Our school community recognises that transport costs can be a worry for young people and their families; arrangements are in place so families know how to discuss this in confidence with staff and how to access help	☐	☐	☐
Our school has spare paper/pens/pencils/essential equipment for use at school or home	☐	☐	☐
Our school offers guidance and support for families to access free school meals (uniform grants, for instance) and also offers to help with completing paperwork	☐	☐	☐
Our school has a homework and remote learning policy which recognises some children and young people may not have access to the internet, IT or other equipment /materials; this is reflected in the homework and remote learning set by teachers and alternative arrangements are offered, eg a homework club, supply of equipment including a dongle or MiFi/SIM card to access the internet, workbooks	☐	☐	☐
Our school does not charge for resources that are essential for learning in accordance with Scottish Government policy which	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Support for families with money worries	Very well implemented	Good start	Needs Improvement
stipulates there should be no additional charges eg for music, home economics, workbooks, art etc			

Our school community offers IT facilities and support and drop-in sessions (online or in person) for families to help families to gain IT skills	☐	☐	☐
The Headteacher/depute head/senior members of staff have an <i>open door</i> policy for parents to talk about family circumstances	☐	☐	☐
We limit the number of <i>dress down days</i> and other charity fundraising events and only ask for donations rather than a fixed charge	☐	☐	☐
Our school works with partner agencies to support families	☐	☐	☐
We have uniform/sports kit/outdoor equipment exchange opportunities, especially for branded uniform items if we have these	☐	☐	☐
The Parent Council helps the school to make sure parents know how to get support – financial, emotional, etc - and that all families feel welcome in the school	☐	☐	☐
Everyone on the Parent Council understands they should try to represent <i>all</i> parents with children at the school	☐	☐	☐
Our school has a breakfast club	☐	☐	☐
Our school runs activities during holiday, eg lunch/activity clubs	☐	☐	☐
We support the local foodbank /local charities which support families	☐	☐	☐
The Parent Council does not charge for all events/activities and asks for voluntary donations rather than fixed prices, where possible	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council organises meetings at different times, or online, or with a crèche/funding for babysitters to make it easier for parents to attend	☐	☐	☐

Our school makes parent consultation appointments available at different times so all families are included; there is always a telephone or online option if families prefer this	☐	☐	☐
Our school community finds ways to support families with information if they want it on such things as nutrition, health, parenting, sleep etc	☐	☐	☐
Our school gives families the choice of paying for lunches with cash or via online payments, understanding that not all families can pay upfront for a week's lunches	☐	☐	☐
Our school and Parent Council discourages parents from giving bought gifts to class teachers and has adopted a No Gifts Policy	☐	☐	☐
We use the <i>Cost of the School Day</i> resource to help us engage with families	☐	☐	☐

EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS: A GLOSSARY

Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a significant and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out everyday activities. This includes illnesses like cancer and multiple sclerosis as well as conditions such as dyslexia and mental health issues. There is also a social model of disability. It says disability is caused by barriers that arise because society is not designed to accommodate people who have impairments. It is these barriers that disable people who have impairments. Find out more at https://inclusionscotland.org/get-informed/social-model
Diversity	Understanding that each individual is unique, and has individual differences. The differences can range from the colour of eyes to race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disability, gender identity, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
Equality	Having the same rights, opportunities and status as other people, regardless of individual differences.
Equity	Ensuring that everyone has what they need to have similar quality experiences. Equity is about meeting individual needs, instead of treating everyone who has a particular difference in the same way.
Inclusion	Inclusion is seen as a universal human right. The aim of inclusion is to embrace and welcome all people, irrespective of difference. It is about giving equal access and opportunities and getting rid of discrimination and intolerance.

Protected characteristics	Aspects of a person protected under the Equality Act 2010. This is designed to protect people against discrimination because of a protected characteristic. The nine protected characteristics are: • age • disability • gender reassignment • marriage and civil partnership • pregnancy and maternity • race • religion and belief • sex • sexual orientation. Intersectionality is when there may be more than one protected characteristic ie we are all multi-facted individuals.
Shared Parenting	This is when parents/carers share care of a child: parents may be separated or divorced, or simply have separate homes. Shared parenting means that schools should include and make arrangements for all parents to be involved and engaged in the child's school life and learning.
We can avoid discrimination when we think positively about difference. Discrimination involves treating people less favourably than you would treat others because of a real or perceived difference (see Diversity). Discrimination may be direct or indirect and can be about one person or group of people. Example of direct discrimination: a parent with Tourette's Syndrome is not made to feel welcome at Parent Council meetings. Example of indirect discrimination: a Parent Council holds all meetings in a pub, which would make it difficult for people who do not drink alcohol for religious reasons to attend.	

You are welcome to use information from this resource. However, if you do, please acknowledge Connect. We welcome your comments and feedback.

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