

## A sample of Equality Objectives from 'Equality Act 2010: Implications for schools' CPD, 21.09.2011

Public bodies are required to publish at least one, or more, equality objectives by 6 April 2012, and at least every four years after that. The objectives need to be published and therefore they should be written in a reasonably accessible format either as an individual document or as part of another report.

As a matter of good practice, objectives should have five features – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-limited. The first two of these, specific and measurable, are explicitly mentioned in legislation.

Listed here below there are:

1. A table with equalities objectives divided between Primary and Secondary. Schools are encouraged to look at both, and use the suggested statements as a stimulus to create their own objectives.
2. A list of equality objectives that met the 'sentiment' of what an equality objective should be about, but the way they were phrased could be questioned as not meeting the 'specific' and 'measurable' criteria. The original objective is in **bold** and *italic*, and it is followed by a brief explanation, and the objective being rephrased to meet what is required by the legislation.

### 1. Equality Objectives developed by primary and secondary colleagues which meet the 'specific' and 'measurable' criteria

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
To promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through all appropriate curricular opportunities, with particular reference to issues of equality and diversity	To reduce the incidence of the use of homophobic language by pupils in school
To reduce prejudice and increase understanding of equality through direct teaching across the curriculum	To narrow the gap between boys and girls in English KS3 and KS4 results
To narrow the gap between boys and girls in mathematics at Level 5	To narrow the gap between boys and girls achievement and attitudes throughout year 9
To reduce the incidence of hostile attitudes and behaviour towards, and between, disabled and non-disabled pupils	To foster good relations further between different communities within our school
To narrow the gap between boys and girls in writing by the end of KS1	To narrow the gap between the different ethnic groups in English KS3 and KS4 results
To promote cultural development and understanding through a rich range of experiences both in and beyond the school	To reduce the number of prejudice-related incidents, in particular towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students.
To reduce the incidence of prejudice-related bullying in relation to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010	To promote cultural understanding between different ethnic groups within our school community.
To continually consider how well the	

school ensures equality of opportunities for all its pupils	
To tackle prejudice and promote understanding in relation to people with disabilities	
To narrow the gap in mathematics between boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 1.	

## 2. Equality Objectives that needed to be re-phrased in order to meet the 'specific' and/or 'measurable' criteria.

- ***‘To ensure that all children are valued equally and supported to reach their full potential’***

This is not, as it stands, either specific or measurable. However, the sentiment is worthy and the objective needs re-phrasing rather than discarding. For example:

*To increase the extent to which all pupils, including in particular those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act, feel valued and confident, and in consequence more likely to achieve their potential.*

Generally, incidentally, it is never possible to measure whether someone has reached their full potential. I recommend extreme caution in the use of this phrase, even though it is extremely common!

The term 'vulnerable children' is not in the Act, and I suggest that it should not be used in the phrasing of equality objectives. If it is nevertheless used, it needs defining. The definition would be something like: 'pupils who have a protected characteristic as defined by [or listed in] the Equality Act 2010'. This is not ideal, but I think it is readily understandable.

Or the definition could be a bit longer and more explicit – something like 'children who may be affected by discrimination and lack of equal opportunity, as defined by the Equality Act 2010'.

Or longer still:

*‘The term vulnerable children is used to refer to all children who are at risk of under-achieving, particularly those who may be affected by discrimination and unequal opportunity, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and who therefore have one or more of the protected characteristics listed in the Act.’*

- ***“To increase staff’s understanding of equality and its implications on a day to day basis”***

This is specific and measurable, but is not, strictly speaking, an outcome objective. Rather, it is an objective to do with improving provision. Perhaps the answer is to expand it:

*To increase staff’s understanding of equality and its implications on a day to day basis, and in this way to reduce or remove inequalities in*

*attainment throughout the school, particularly inequalities relating to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act’.*

- **“To increase the level of pupil voice by extending our traditional school council to include a fair representation of all pupils in school”**
- **“To increase the membership of vulnerable pupils to out of school clubs and activities”**
- **“To narrow the gap between vulnerable groups of pupils and other pupils in access to homework support”**

These three are similar to the one on staff training in that they are arguably means to an end rather than ends in themselves. However, they seem to me extremely worthwhile, and are defensible as equality objectives. Particularly they are defensible if they are expanded slightly, as follows:

*To increase the level of pupil voice by extending our traditional school council to include a fair representation of all pupils in school, and in this way to foster good relationships in the school between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not*

*To increase the membership of vulnerable pupils in [in, note, not to!] out-of-school clubs and activities, and in this way to reduce or remove inequalities in attainment throughout the school, particularly inequalities relating to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act*

*To narrow the gap between vulnerable groups of pupils and other pupils in access to homework support, and in this way to reduce or remove inequalities in attainment throughout the school, particularly inequalities relating to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act*

- **To narrow the gap between low income pupils and non-low income pupils in the level achieved in literacy at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stages**

Socio-economic circumstances is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, I would encourage schools to include them in their equality objectives, providing they do *also* include some of those who are protected.

***Further information and guidance:***

The Equality and Human Rights Commission published guidance on the ‘Equality Objectives and the Equality Duty: A guide for public authorities’. However this guidance is not specific for schools, and it was published in January 2011, see: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/new-public-sector-equality-duty-guidance/>

It might be worth taking a look, but also check on their website for a more recent publication, and one specific for schools.