



St Michael's Parish School Ashburton

Gender Equality Policy

August 2018

Rationale:

At St Michael's we adopt a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships for all students, staff and families by promoting a culture of participation, respect, support, equity and fairness.

St Michael's is committed to creating a school community where all staff, students and families are equally respected and valued and enjoy equity of opportunity, outcomes and experiences.

ST MICHAEL'S PARISH SCHOOL IS A RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS LEAD SCHOOL

Purpose:

St Michael's recognises that:

- gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of staff, students and families, particularly women and girls, in the immediate and long term. Under the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010* all organisations have a *positive duty* to take proactive steps to prevent discriminatory practices.[1]
- the prevalence and impact of gender-based discrimination and harassment. St Michael's is committed to educating and building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality.
- gender inequality is both structural and individual. This means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in the structures, systems, policies, processes and governance of institutions in the community.
- girls and boys, women and men are subject to gendered stereotypes and expectations about how they should behave, think and act. These gendered stereotypes and expectations contribute to gender inequality by assigning unequal value, status and power to women and men. These expectations are reinforced by structures, systems, norms and cultures that often privilege the knowledge, rights, perspectives and skills of males over females.
- gender inequality can be both a cause and consequence of direct and indirect discrimination. This discrimination is sometimes the result of unconscious bias, which is when our behaviours, choices and practices are shaped by underlying assumptions and attitudes that we do not realise are shaping our actions..

- gender inequality is evident throughout our society, and research suggests it is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of gender-based violence.[2]
- schools are vital spaces in our community to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Principles:

St Michael's, as an education institution and an employer, is committed to promoting gender equality and to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all staff, parents and students.

St Michael's school policies, procedures, systems and structures will promote gender equality and seek to redress any gender inequities.

St Michael's staff is responsible for promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships.

At St Michael's all staff, parents and students will be encouraged to use language and/or demonstrate behaviour that:

- promotes equal relationships between women and men;
- promotes equal opportunity for all staff;
- challenges gender stereotypes;
- condemns violence against women, men and children

At St Michael's the promotion of gender equality and modelling respectful relationships is important for students, parents, staff and families.

St Michael's will work to ensure all staff feel respected, safe and valued in the workplace, and will take proactive measures to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all. This will include ensuring processes and policies are free of bias.

Definitions:

The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 defines:

Family violence as:

- Behaviour that is: Physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive; Threatening or coercive; Controls or dominates a family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or well-being of that family member or another person, or
- Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of any behaviour referred to above.

Gender as:

- the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender is what defines femininity and masculinity.

The Respectful Relationships Resource Kit, 2018 defines:

Gender equality as:

- men and women having equal access to opportunities in all spheres of life.

Gender inequality as:

- men and women not having equal access to opportunities in all spheres of life.

Gender equity as:

- men and women being treated fairly

Gender inequity as:

- men and women not being treated fairly

Respectful Relationships as:

- the building and promotion of gender equity in relationships, and the challenging of gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotyping as:

- the belief that women and men have different roles or characteristics (both in relationships and in society)

Evaluation:

The Gender Equity Policy will be reviewed every four years as part of the School Improvement Plan review cycle.

Ratification:

The Gender Equality Policy was ratified by Michael Fletcher (SAC Chairperson) in September 2018.

[1] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2011) *Positive duty: Know your responsibilities*, <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-resources-and-publications/know-your-responsibilities-brochures/item/133-positive-duty-know-your-responsibilities-aug-2011>.

[2] Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne.