



Protected Characteristics at The Good Shepherd Academy

What are protected characteristics?

In 2010, The Equality Act became law. In this act, it outlines nine protected characteristics. These cover everyone in Britain and protect people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The nine protected characteristics are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Race
5. Religion or belief
6. Marriage or civil partnership
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Pregnancy and maternity

How are these taught?

Our approach to teaching protected characteristics is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals. Schools with a religious character are not exempt from complying with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the statutory guidance states that by the **end of secondary school**, pupils should know the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality with reference to the protected characteristics. This means that although primary schools are required by law to ensure equality and respect for all pupils and their families, **they are not** required to provide teaching on the *specifics* of the protected characteristics.

At The Good Shepherd, we carefully consider the teachings of the Catholic Church, the age of the children, and the rule of law when discussing protected characteristics. We believe that it is important that our children know about protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way to encourage them to respect, celebrate and value the diversity of all in our communities.

We therefore teach children that the nine protected characteristics are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. How you present yourself
4. Race
5. Religion
6. Relationships
7. Gender
8. Who you choose to love
9. Pregnancy and maternity

Parents and carers are often keen to know how we teach 'gender reassignment' and 'sexual orientation' within our Catholic context.

How you present yourself (Gender Reassignment - but we don't use this language)

This is not a protected characteristic we teach at The Good Shepherd. We touch on it across the curriculum, but only in relation to the idea that everyone is free to dress and present themselves how they would like. This might be as simple as wearing the clothes they want to wear and having the hairstyle they would like, and the respect we must show to everyone who look different to us.

Who you choose to love (Sexual Orientation - but we don't use this language)

We would talk about this protected characteristic as 'we can grow up and choose to love who we would like to.' When discussing families in Year 3, we talk about different families and describe that some families may have a Mummy and Mummy, or Daddy and Daddy (alongside all different combinations for example step-families and half siblings). As Christians we recognise the importance of helping our children understand that all family structures where there is love should be respected and valued.

We teach in Year 5 and Year 6 that as Catholics we believe that marriage is a sacred sacrament between a man and a woman. We also teach in Year 6 that the law tells us civil partnerships can be between two people of the same gender. We don't explicitly teach LGBTQ+ language at The Good Shepherd, this is taught at secondary level.

The 9 Protected Characteristics are actively promoted at The Good Shepherd through:

- Our school mission statement
- Our school core values: respect, courage, mercy, achievement, joy, generosity, service and gratitude
- Our school behaviour policy
- Conscious role modelling by all adults in the school community
- Active engagement and communication with parents and carers
- Liturgical Prayer
- Teaching of British Values
- Discussion within curriculum subjects, taking a cross-curricular approach
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) lessons
- Religious Education (RE) lessons and RSE lessons
- Sporting, Art and Cultural Events including our bi-annual 'Cultural Diversity Day' and 'Aspirations Week'
- Charitable work and work within the local community e.g. 'The Big Snore' for charities like Framework
- Educational visits
- Real-life learning outside the classroom including Forest Schools
- Guest speakers that represent our school demographic and country we live in