

## **What do schools as employers need to be aware of?**

They should ensure that religion and belief are included in their Equality Policy. It is a good idea to revisit the Equality Policy from time to time to ensure it has not become outdated, to test any new employment policies and procedures for discrimination and to ensure the policy itself meets current legislation requirements.

All staff need to be made aware (through training, notice boards, circulars, contracts of employment etc) that it is not only unacceptable to discriminate, harass or victimise someone on the grounds of religion or belief, it is also unlawful. Organisations should also make it clear that they will not tolerate such behaviour. Staff should know what to do if they believe they have been discriminated against or harassed, or if they believe someone else is being discriminated against or harassed, and this should be included in the grievance procedure.

Organisations should also consider adding all forms of discrimination and harassment (religion or belief, sex, race, disability, gender reassignment and sexual orientation) to their disciplinary rules which should also include bullying. It is good practice to include age in your policies ahead of age discrimination becoming unlawful in October 2006.

## **Do the Regulations cover all religions and beliefs?**

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of religion, religious belief, perceived religion or religious belief, or similar philosophical belief.

It is as unlawful to discriminate against a person for not holding a specific religion or belief as it is to discriminate against someone for actually holding to or subscribing to a particular religion or belief.

The Regulations apply to all workers. They also cover related areas such as membership of trade organisations, the award of qualifications, the services of careers guidance organisations,

employment agencies and vocational training providers, including further and higher education institutions.

The Regulations cover anyone who applies to an organisation for work, or who already works for an organisation whether they are directly employed or work under some other kind of contract or are an agency worker, for example a supply teacher.

Organisations are also responsible for the behaviour of their staff towards an individual working for someone else but on their premises, for example someone from another organisation repairing a piece of equipment.

Workers are sometimes harassed by third parties, such as customers or clients. Where possible, organisations should protect their staff from such harassment and should take steps to deal with actual or potential situations of this kind. This will enhance the organisation's reputation as a good employer and make the organisation a welcoming and safe place to work.

Many organisations provide visitors and visiting workers with guidance on Health and Safety matters. It may be appropriate to include some comments in any policy your organisation has on harassment.