

# Equal Opportunity, Gender Equity & Intercultural Policy

## Introductory Statement

This policy document was drawn up:

- a. To ensure equality of access to all pupils and staff in the school environment
- b. To ensure that no condition be allowed hinder a persons participation in school life

Policy formation was a collaborative exercise between staff, Board of Management, parents and children.

## Rationale

The policy was re-drafted because:

1. The existing policy was originally drafted in 2006 and required updating.
2. Legislation in relation to equality of access has been activated , such as the
  - Employment Equality Act 1998
  - Education Act 1998
  - Equality Status Act 2000
  - Education Welfare Act 2000
  - EPSEN Act 2004 (postponed since budget day)
3. To promote the principles of justice and equality for all in accessing and participating in the curriculum as provided by St. Anthony's School.
4. The need for intercultural policy guidelines is needed in our school as we gain more pupils from different backgrounds and cultures.

## Links to School Ethos

St. Anthony's School endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities regardless of physical disability, gender, race, religion, learning disability or culture. We also commit to preparing each and every pupil for life by promoting value and respect for all. The schools mission statement promotes the spirit of inclusiveness and the principles of equality and differences are respected and valued in our school.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- To instill a sense of pride in our own culture whilst simultaneously cultivating an understanding of the value of cultural diversity.
- Ensuring compliance with all requirements of legislation
- Promoting equal opportunities in an environment where diversity is respected, valued and celebrated.

## **Organisational Procedures**

### **Enrolment**

All pupils who are assessed by a Psychologist as having a Mild General Learning Disability are welcome to enroll regardless of Race, Religion, gender, family status, or membership of the 'Travelling Community' and arrangements are made on enrolment for families who do not wish their children to participate in Religion, R.S.E or other curriculum areas.

### **Anti-Bullying**

St. Anthony's School has a proactive Code of Behaviour promoting positive discipline and respect for each other alongside a firm Anti-Bullying Policy. It is planned to develop a School Charter detailing each child's rights to a school free from bullying, racism or any form of discrimination.

### **Interviewing**

The Board of Management is an equal opportunities Employer as per the Equal Status Act 2000, and the Employment Equality Act 1998, and no discriminatory questions on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, family status etc. will be asked at interview. Correct procedures for promotion will be strictly adhered to as per the CPSMA handbook and fair and equitable measures in relation to Post of Responsibility, Maternity Leave, career breaks, etc. will be implemented.

### **Communication**

While the school has a very low percentage of children of foreign nationals, verbal contact with parents of these children is the preferred mode of communication. The staff are also made aware of the different cultural practices of these parents / children through verbal communication.

The school has a policy of communicating with both parents on pupil progress where divorce or separation is an issue, unless a Court Ruling prescribes differently.

## **Input of Parents**

The Parents Association of the school have an input into the formulation of the Equality policy. The Board and Parent Association refers all parents to the Education Welfare Act 2000 at regular intervals through monthly newsletters and circulars which highlight issues such as

- a) School attendance, the Education Welfare Board and absenteeism
- b) Multi-culturalism, drug awareness, obesity, RSE etc. through organizing talks for parents

The school will also identify parents on low income who are unable to afford books / uniforms/ school outings / P.E. & Music and refer them to where they can source assistance.

## **Induction and Teaching**

The school enrolment form gathers all the information the school will need to address issues of inequality, such as family background, culture, medical concerns and learning or physical disabilities. This enables the school to access relevant supports such as language teachers, SNA'S and teaching materials. There is regular communication between class teacher and parents prior to and during the child's early school life. All teaching materials acquired are chosen and used in a manner reflecting diversity.

All teachers share information which is updated annually. The school promotes non academic activities such as bowling, swimming, basketball, football, etc. in a manner favourable to all sexes, races and religions. Classes are split on a non academic non gender basis. Special efforts are made to avoid stereotyping when designating tasks and presenting classroom materials. Each teacher also conducts formal sessions on equality and gender equity and cultural issues.

## **Curriculum Access**

The school endeavours to enable all children to access all curriculum areas engaging them in appropriate intellectually stimulating work. All children are given opportunities to engage in integration, and appreciate other cultures and languages.

Special arrangements are made for children of non-nationals and children with specific learning difficulties in relation to the teaching of Irish. Teachers promote the Irish culture and language alongside the English curriculum and teachers also introduce other cultures to the pupils as appropriate.

SESE offers many areas where diversity and differences can be celebrated. Geography lessons will focus on people, food and the physical features of other countries. S.P.H.E strands such as 'Myself and Others' are also used to celebrate different cultures.

## **Special Needs**

This is a Special School which has 5 Special Class Teachers and 1 Special Unit teacher for deaf children. There are 4 Part-Time Subject Resource teachers who teach PE, Music, Woodwork and Home Economics. All pupils over 12 years of age participate in these subjects.

Children in the Special Unit have access to their peer age classes for Social subjects primarily, and can also engage with other children through the operation of a "Buddy System"

## **Resources**

There are a lot of resources available for staff to use to promote equal opportunities and cultural awareness. These are available in the school Library or Staff Resource room. Please see Library Policy for more information.

## **Evaluation of Policy**

The policy is subject to continual review under the following -

1. All pupils accessing the curriculum at a level appropriate to their needs.
2. Increased awareness of difference and acceptance of same.
3. Maintaining a happy school atmosphere.
4. Staff and parental satisfaction.
5. Improvement in pupil attainment level in both academic and Social areas and accessing appropriate support services.

## **Ratification / Review / Implementation**

The original policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Anthony's School in December 2006 and implemented immediately.

Following review in October 2008 this policy was updated and shared with all partners prior to ratification by the Board of Management on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008. It will be reviewed as the need arises.