



Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy document was drawn up:

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

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

Rationale

The policy was drafted:

- To reflect legislation in relation to equality of access has been activated, such as the
 - Employment Equality Act 1998
 - Education Act 1998
 - Equality Status Act 2000
- To promote the principles of justice and equality for all in accessing and participating in the curriculum as provided by Muire gan Smál, Claremorris.

Links to School Ethos

Muire gan Smál endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities regardless of physical disability, gender, race, religion or learning disability. 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.

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 are welcome to enrol regardless of race, religion, gender, family status, disability or whether or not they are a member of the 'Travelling Community'. Arrangements are made on enrolment for families who do not wish their children to participate in religion, R.S.E. or other curriculum areas.

Interviewing:

The Board of Management is an equal opportunities employer as per the Equal Status Act 2000, and the Employment Equality Act 1998. No discriminatory questions on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, family status etc. will be asked during the interview process. 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.*

Communication:

Good communication is vital to the success and happiness of pupil, parent and teacher. In relation to new comer children, verbal contact with parents of these children is the preferred mode of communication. The staffs are also made aware of the different cultural practices of these parents/children through verbal communication. The school also has an anti-racism charter (*see Intercultural Policy*).

The school has a policy of communicating with both parents on pupil's 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 of Management and Parents Association refers all parents to the Education Welfare Act 2000 at regular intervals through monthly newsletters and circulars which highlight issues such as:

- School attendance, the Education Welfare Board and absenteeism.
- Multi-culturalism, drug awareness, obesity *etc.* through organising talks for parents.

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

Induction and Teaching:

The school Infants Enrolment Form gathers all the information the school will need to address issues of inequality, such as family background, 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 the 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 tag rugby, football *etc* in a manner which is favourable to all sexes, races and religions. Classes are split (*where necessary*) on a non-academic, non-gender basis. Instead we split classes according to birthdays. 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.

Curriculum Access:

The school endeavours to enable all pupils to access all curriculums which shall enable pupils to engage in appropriate intellectually stimulating work. All children are given an opportunity 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 relations to the teaching of Irish. Exemptions are sought for children of non-nationals who enrol in 4th class or higher and for children with a psychological report recommending exemption from Irish, subject to parental consent and in keeping with the professional recommendation of the class teacher.

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. SPHE strands such as 'Myself and Others' are also used to celebrate different cultures.

Special Needs:

The school has a complement of LST/RT. Children with special needs in mainstream have access to learning support and resource hours in addition to full time mainstream integration.

Evaluation of Policy

The policy is subject to continual review under the following:

- The pupils accessing the curriculum at a level appropriate to their needs.
- Increased awareness of differences and acceptance of same.
- Maintaining a happy school atmosphere.
- Staff and parental satisfaction.
- Improvement in pupil attainment level in academic and social areas.

Ratification/Review/Implementation

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2008 and implemented immediately. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Signed: Peter McCallig
(*Chairperson BOM*)