



## **Intercultural Education Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

Scoil Muire gan Smál welcomes pupils of all nationalities and cultures. Its current enrolment of 231 pupils includes 52% non-national children. This intercultural document sets out our policy in relation to the enrolment and education of these children.

### **Rationale**

The policy is necessary as our school is growing significantly leading to an increasing challenge with regard to the needs of our pupils, parents and teachers. We acknowledge the diversity of our school population and the necessity to instill in our pupils the need to respect difference and our need to facilitate an intercultural curriculum.

### **Principles**

*As a school community we:*

- Respect the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions and languages among our pupils.
- Support the principle of inclusiveness.
- Acknowledge that all children have an equal right to Education.
- Will be proactive in challenging racism.
- Will seek to actively promote an environment where cultural differences can be explored and respected.

### **Aims:**

- To develop an appreciation of difference.
- Develop in each child a respect for self and for others.
- Ensure each child is valued and has a good sense of self.
- Recognise the value of different cultures.
- Promote a pluralistic approach to the acquisition of knowledge.
- Recognise the potential of the curriculum knowledge to develop interculturalism.

### **Guidelines**

#### **1. School Ethos**

Muire Gan Smál is a Catholic primary school. We aim to provide a holistic Christian education in co-operation with teachers, pupils, parents, management and the local community. We endeavour to provide equality for all, fostering mutual respect and appreciation of individual talents and gifts.

#### **2. Enrolment**

- The school enrolment policy governs enrolment of all pupils.
- The enrolment procedure for non-national pupils is exactly the same as that of Irish pupils.
- Non-national children are welcome to enrol in our school, provided there is a place in the appropriate class, in line with our enrolment policy.
- Parents of overseas children are supported with completion of enrolment documents and the enrolment forms have been translated into the Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian Languages.
- Every effort is made to create a warm and welcoming environment for non-national parents seeking enrolment of their children.
- Non-national children whose mother tongue is not English will be placed in an age appropriate class in so far as is possible.

### **Anti-Racism Chapter**

The following anti-racism chapter was drawn up in response to recent changes in enrolment.

- We show respect to all members of our school community.

- We welcome everyone to our school.
- We recognise and value diversity.
- We encourage positive values and attitudes to diversity.
- We promote positive community relations.
- We prepare our pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.
- We challenge attitudes that lead to society discrimination.
- We deal promptly with any incidence of discrimination.

This Anti-Racism Chapter is on display in the school corridors. All staff have been involved with drawing up this chapter and have responsibility in making pupils aware of it.

### **Dealing with Racist incidence**

A racist incident is an incident where verbal or physical aggression targets a victim on the basis his/her colour, religion, ethnicity, including membership of an ethnic minority community.

Racism is the belief that some people are inferior because they belong to a certain ethnic, racial or cultural group. This belief leads to attitudes of prejudice and discriminatory actions. We as a school community strive to affirm the values of all children and their parents as we feel that where there is reciprocal knowledge and understanding of different ways of life there is respect and tolerance.

### **Dealing with Racist incidence**

- When racist incidents do occur it is our responsibility to deal with the incident, in the same way that any form of unacceptable behaviour is dealt with, by counselling the children who have behaved unacceptably and by giving support to the child/children at the receiving end of such behaviour.
- We have included in our anti-bullying policy routine principles and procedures for responding, recording and monitoring racist incidents. Staff, children, parents, Board of Management members and ancillary staff are aware that the anti-bullying policy contains a direct reference to racism and racist incidents and that use of abusive racist terms are unacceptable behaviour in the school.

### **Home-School Links**

- We acknowledge the importance of healthy home-school links as central to the success of this intercultural policy.

### **Language Acquisitions**

When non-national children enrol in our school the parents are advised on the following good practice to encourage the acquisition of English.

- Children should continue to use their mother tongue at home.
- Children are given a settling in period before they are requested to participate in oral language activities in class.
- Children of the same mother tongue are free to converse in this language during the school day.
- Children will be encouraged to teach the class some basic words from their native tongue *e.g.* hello, thank you, please, goodbye.
- Irish will not be taught to the non-national children for their initial settling in period.

### **Provision of Supplementary English Support**

- The school currently has three language support teachers.
- The school will endeavour to group the children according to ability when receiving language support.
- In general, older pupils will be offered more language support time. (*See also: English as an Additional Language Policy*)

### **Whole School Measures**

- Every effort will be made to deliver an intercultural education to all pupils.

- Overseas children will be encouraged to go on school outings/tours and participate in projects and sport events.
- We will endeavour to have an intercultural day.
- All non-national children participate in reading strategies *i.e.* paired/buddy reading.
- The school will encourage overseas parents to become involved in Parent Association Activities.
- Classroom Teachers and Language Support Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and plan appropriately.

### **Homework**

- Non-national pupils are given homework suitable to their needs.
- Once they have attained a proficient level of English they will be requested to attempt the homework set out for their class.

### **Attendance**

- The Education Act (2000) is brought to the attention of non-national parents in relation to the school attendance of their children.

### **Uniform**

- All children are requested to wear the school uniform. Religious customs in relation to any aspect of uniform will be discussed by parents.

### **Resources**

- The school receives an annual grant to €650 from the D.E.S. This is given to the language support teachers to purchase suitable resources for language support.
- We are currently using two language programmes in the school – Jump Ahead and Way Ahead.
- Non-national children also partake in classroom reading schemes and activity books where appropriate.
- Computers and ICT are used as tools to promote language development and interculturalism.

### **Staff Development**

- The language teachers are registered with IILT and all have attended training courses for EAL.
- In-service courses on interculturalism have also been participated in by Language Support teachers.

We as a staff appreciate the culture shock that non-national children face and the challenge of assimilation into the Irish Education system. Where a psychological assessment is deemed necessary the procedure as laid out in the special needs policy will be followed.

### **Assessment of non-English Speaking Pupils**

Assessment of English Language Proficiency for non-English speaking pupils is provided for through the Primary School Assessment kit. This assessment kit was developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training with the help of Language Support Teachers. The tests are based on IILT's English Language Proficiency benchmarks over thirteen Units of Work.

The assessment consists of the following four skills **1.** Listening **2.** Speaking **3.** Reading **4.** Writing.

There are three sets of Assessment **Set 1.** Placement **Set 2.** **Set 3.**

Each set is graded in relation to three levels **A1.** This is the lowest level – aimed at pupils with limited English Language Proficiency **A2.** Waystage - for pupils with developing proficiency **B1.** Threshold – this is the highest level of assessment and as pupils perform tasks at this level full integration into mainstream is possible.

The Language Support teachers administer the tests and an individual file for each pupil is maintained including all assessments, scoring sheets and pupil's assessment profiles.

### **Curriculum**

- We will endeavour to tailor the curriculum to cater for non-national students.

- The Language Support Programme is organised around the following Units of Work.
  1. Classroom Language
  2. Myself and my family
  3. Our School
  4. Food and Clothes
  5. Time and Seasons
  6. Festivals
  7. Weather
  8. People and Places in other Areas
  9. Animals and Plants
  10. Caring for my locality

### **Role and Responsibilities**

- We as the Staff of 'Muire an Smál' acknowledge the recent change in demographic in our school and we endeavour to support all pupils in a school environment which is inclusive of all cultures and facilitates all children in valuing their own heritage and the heritage of others.
- The Language Support team have responsibilities for spending the budget on suitable resources, planning for children in respect of Language Support, timetabling and organising suitable groups for instruction.

### **Timeframe for Implementation and Review**

- The decisions as laid out in this policy will take effect from September 2008.
- The Policy was reviewed in 2010.

### **Ratification**

The Intercultural policy was formulated by the staff and approved by the Board of Management of 'Muire gan Smál'.

Peter McCallig  
(*Chairperson B.O.M.*)