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Equality of

access and

# participation

- equal opportunities -

2020

## **1. Introduction**

This policy was developed in collaboration between the Board of Management, staff and parents.

Other policies reviewed/referred to in the development of this policy include Admissions, Behaviour, Anti-bullying, Attendance, Communication, and SPHE.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all personnel involved in the running of the school. It should be reflected in how all persons, adults and children are considered. Concerns regarding the effective implementation of the policy should be brought to the attention of teachers, Principal or Board of Management as appropriate using the model for grievance procedures. All members of the school community are expected to support this policy.

## **2. Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is

* to comply with the *Education Act* (2018), *Employment Equality Act* (2015) and *Equal Status Act* (2018);
* to enable all our pupils to access and participate in education
* to promote the principles of equality and justice within our school community.

## **3. Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school**

## (ref *School Mission Statement*)

St Patrick’s NS aims:

- to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children’s self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation

* to value uniqueness through each child’s personality, intelligence and development potential
* to recognise, encourage, and celebrate individual talents, interests and potential
* to teach the value of mutual support and encouragement
* to support and help those who find achievement to be more challenging
* to prioritise children’s special needs, and ensure that they are given the maximum possible attention
* to promote an understanding and appreciation of the moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural values which shape our society and to foster respect for such values
* to nurture an awareness of national and European heritage, helping the children to develop a deep sense of Irish identity within a European and worldwide context
* to welcome children from other cultural backgrounds, and to respect and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences
* to actively encourage the children to care for themselves, their families, their friends and their environment, placing priority on the development of a sense of personal and joint care, and responsibility, both within the school, family, parish and wider community.

## **4. Aims**

By introducing this policy, the school aims to ensure

* that the school complies with legislative requirements and principles of good practice
* that each person in our school feels valued and respected
* the creation of an environment where diversity is valued and celebrated
* the provision of equal opportunities for all persons
* the preparation of pupils for life in a multicultural society and with an understanding of the value of cultural diversity and a sense of pride in their own culture*.*

**5. Organisational areas**

**5.1 Enrolment**

All parents are welcome to apply for enrolment in our school irrespective of race, religion, membership of traveller community, family status, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The school has a comprehensive Admissions Policy and places are offered according to the criteria laid out therein and depending on the number of places available.

Parents are made aware of the characteristic spirit/ethos of the school prior to enrolment and are aware of the religious denomination of the school and its reflection in the curriculum offered and the organisation of the school.

The *Equal Status Act* provides that exemptions may be made relevant to a religious, educational or medical institution under the direction or control of a body established for religious purposes whose objectives include provision of services in an environment which promotes certain religious values, in relation to enrolment of pupils.

All pupils are placed in age appropriate classes. Arrangements are made for pupils who do not wish to participate in the Church of Ireland RE curricular programme. Parents may also withdraw their children from *Stay Safe* programme and/or RSE lessons.

Support is offered to pupils, parents, or staff whose first language is not English, and to those who are not Irish Nationals.

**5.2 Staff**

The Board of Management is an equal opportunities employer i.e. does not discriminate against any application for a position (or continuation in employment, training opportunities, promotion etc.) in the school based on the nine grounds as set out in the Equal Status Act.

Procedures for promotional posts within the school are made known to all (ref INTO Handbook/CD). The format outlined in the CPSMA *Board of Management handbook* for the advertisement and selection of staff is followed.

Annual assignment of classes to teachers is done by the principal. All teachers are provided with a form on which they list all classes taught to date, and note their three first preferences for the coming year. Every effort is made to give first preferences, though this is not always possible in the best interest of the school.

The school has a fair and equitable procedure in relation to job sharing, secondment, staff development, career breaks, study leave, carer’s leave, maternity and paternity leave applications, etc. A maximum of two applications for leave of absence for a full school year are accepted by the Board, and all applications are carefully considered. Opportunities for professional development are encouraged, and every effort is made to facilitate such courses.

**5.3 Home/school communication**

All education partners (teachers, parents, Board of Management and children) are involved in the many successful formal and informal communication channels and co-operation opportunities throughout the school. They include numerous means for on-going contact and special interest opportunities, such as

* one-to-one/team meetings between parents and teachers/principal
* Newsletters
* telephone, e-mail, post, - personal contact
* parent representatives on Board of Management
* annual meetings:
* new Junior Infant class (May/June);
* class-based parent/teacher/principal meetings for all classes (September)
* Parent Teacher Association (PTA) annual general meeting (October)
* teacher/parent one-to-one consultations (February).

### ***Special circumstances***

When parents are separated or divorced, particular procedures are agreed for home/school communication and reporting on pupil progress. Where parents do not have a working knowledge of English, or may not be able to read, arrangements will be put in place to ensure effective home/school communication.

## **5.4 Parental involvement**

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) constitution ensures a gender balance of parent representatives (4 male, 4 female), as well as a minimum of 2 teachers, and the chairperson of the Board of Management.

A cross-community inter-school collaborative programme has been in place with Rutland Street NS in Dublin since 1999. Projects and events are organized on a regular basis in both schools.

Parents have opportunities to get involved with school life in various ways, including Parent Teacher Association, sports coaching, gardening, Green School; ICT, inter-school collaboration, library, policy development and fundraising. Parents also get involved in school life through in-school support and collaboration (eg theme weeks, educational tours), and after-school activities (organised by parent volunteers).

## **5.5 Uniform**

The school has a uniform, and all parents are requested to ensure that it is always worn to school by their children, and presented in a clean and tidy manner. Financial support is available for parents who cannot afford the uniform. The Board of Management will consider requests from parents who wish their child to wear garments relevant to their culture with the uniform. There are no gender issues in relation to the wearing of the uniform.

## **5.6 Attendance**

Parents are aware of the *Education Welfare Act* (2000) and issues relating to attendance as mentioned in the Act relating to attendance. Attendance is monitored on an ongoing basis, and parents are required to fill in a standard form to explain all absences. Pupils may absent themselves to participate in religious/cultural ceremonies that do not coincide with those of the school, with written permission from their parents.

## **5.7 Lunch**

The school operates a healthy lunch policy, which accommodates the dietary requirements and restrictions of pupils and of religious fastings etc. Special notification is made in cases of food allergies, etc.

**5.8 Code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy**

The school’s *Behaviour Charter* and *Anti-bullying policy* promote respect for all members of the school community.

**5.9 Anti-racism**

An *Inclusion Charter* is being developed in tandem with this policy, to be drawn up by a committee with representatives of staff, parents, Board of Management and pupils, and will be available from the school office.

Racist comments or incidents are dealt with by following the school standard grievance procedures (ref *CPSMA Board of Management handbook*). Such incidents are recorded on a standard incident report form and filed. The school authorities deal with such matters in a fair and equitable way, and listen to and support all children/staff/parents equally when they report such incidents, and strive to assist the perpetrators of racist incidents towards understanding why their actions are unacceptable.

## **5.10 Pupil induction**

Parents usually have an opportunity to visit the school, and if possible meet the class teacher prior to the child’s first day at the school. Depending on the age of the child, a buddy system, or similar, is established to help the child to settle into the new class or school. In some cases such as special needs, there is communication between the class teacher and the parents and the child prior to the child starting school. As much background information as possible is acquired prior to the child starting school, and this is made available to the class teacher when a new child joins the class.

## **5.11 Staff induction**

New staff members have an opportunity to visit the school and meet the principal/deputy principal prior to starting work at the school. There is an open-door policy for those who wish to speak with, or meet the principal – and members of the school’s in-school management team are always willing to offer information, support and advice. A support arrangement is in place to help new staff members to settle in, while a mentoring system is also being considered.

## **5.12 Homework**

Most pupils within each class are given the same homework. However, special assignments are given to pupils on the basis of special educational needs, or other circumstances as may arise from time to time. Parents are encouraged to support homework by establishing good homework routines (ref *What, why and how?,* NCCA and *Tips for parents*, INTO), and are required to sign homework journals to illustrate satisfaction with the standard reached. When assigning homework, class teachers consider the access that the child has to the materials required and tasks set (eg access to internet, reference material). Pupils should bring home books and materials required for homework on that particular day. The overloading of schoolbags should be avoided.

## **5.13 Tours and organised events**

All pupils have equal opportunity to participate in school tours and school organised outings. Support is available to ensure that no child is excluded for financial reasons. Special arrangements are made for pupils with disability, as required, unless such a facility is not available

**5.14 Extra- curricular activities (arranged in after-school hours)**

All pupils may avail of the extra-curricular activities promoted by the school, due consideration having been given as to equality of access and participation before promoting them. Persons conducting extra-curricular activities eg Irish dancing teachers, music teachers, etc are aware of the obligation on schools to provide an education to the pupils which is appropriate to their abilities and needs.

**5.15 Transition to post-primary school**

All pupils are encouraged in their progression to post primary education, and beyond. The school provides on-going support for pupils who may be ‘at risk’ in this regard through direct pupil contact and home/school communication, as well as contact with external agencies where applicable. Arrangements to assist successful transition to post primary school include in-class discussion, a special visiting facilitator, teacher-to-teacher contact between the two schools, and completion of transition reports as requested. The PTA organises an information evening for all parents in the area, where numerous schools are invited to make a presentation, and meet prospective parents and students. Parents are reminded to make arrangements regarding post-primary school for their children as early as possible, and the principal meets with parents to discuss their options, and to assist them in the application process, if requested.

## **6. Resources**

Diversity is reflected in the textbooks used in the school, and images of other cultures are often visible throughout the school. The school library, as well as classroom libraries, include many books portraying cultural diversity, including role models who reflect achievements of persons who are travellers, single parent families/divorced/separated parents, old/young/disabled, of different race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or gender.

The school uses the Internet as an intercultural resource, and infant toys/games reflect cultural diversity, while visual images used (posters/projects) support the principle and practice of equality. The school has many curriculum resources to support this policy (eg SPHE and RSE).

## **7. Staff development**

All teachers are aware of what equality involves, the principles of equality in education and the methodologies advocated for its success. Teachers are encouraged to engage in professional development and to support one another in this, and other, areas. The school has a number of systems for sourcing reference materials, including conferences, book fairs, internet sources, professional periodicals, etc. Staff members are aware of organisations that have information/can offer support.

The school ensures that subject areas of the curriculum reflect the diversity of other cultures and the principles of equality, through its planning, assessment and review process. Classroom activities and school procedures strive to affirm diversity.

The school does not have any pupils who have come to Ireland as asylum seekers at this time; however, staff members are aware of the circumstances surrounding asylum seekers, including their departure from their homeland, the asylum process, etc.

**8. Assessment**

Assessments are considered equally suitable for all children in the school, and are administered appropriately. Standardised assessment tests are administered on a regular basis, and results used to ensure the best possible learning support programme.

**9. Curriculum**

All children have access to every area of the curriculum. Each child is engaged in intellectually stimulating work appropriate to his/her intellectual ability.

Parents are encouraged to allow their child to take part in all areas of the curriculum. However, alternative arrangements are made for those who do not wish their child to participate in an activity for medical/health reasons or on religious grounds.

Teaching methodologies employed in the classroom to support integration and promote equality of participation include circle time, co-operative learning, projects, groupings etc. ICT is utilised as a resource to meet the needs of pupils in several curricular areas, both within the classroom and in the new ICT room.

### **9.1 Religion**

Understanding other religions, commonalty of other religions, struggle for the freedom of belief, etc are addressed through the curricular programme.

**9.2 Gaeilge**

A small number of pupils have an exemption from Gaeilge, under Circular 14/87.

The school supports teachers studying for the Scrúdú Cailíochta sa Ghaeilge. Parents who wish to support their child in learning Gaeilge, may access resources through the school, including material from NCCA.

**9.3 English**

The principles of equality and respect for diversity are reflected in the textbooks used by the pupils. Support for pupils and parents whose mother tongue is not English is provided through our SEN teaching team, through

* oral language, where all our pupils get an opportunity to partake, debate, justify, etc;
* use of the novel, selection of which includes consideration of the portrayal of all peoples, communities etc;
* phonics, where the challenges faced by non English-speaking pupils are taken into particular consideration;
* print rich environment, where we reflect and promote diversity, throughout the school. There are opportunities to analyse the media coverage of key news stories from other countries through various subjects.
* creative writing, where pupils have ongoing opportunities to use their imagination, to write about their opinions, etc.

### **9.4 Maths**

Pupils have opportunities to explore currencies, measures (metric and other), commonality of numeration and number operations, international contributions to maths, famous mathematicians, counting in different languages, etc. Senior pupils are introduced to statistics, graphs, and proportional representation in elections etc.

### **9.5 Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)**

### *History*

There a balance of hero/heroine, international history, portrayal of perpetrators, gender ratio, principal characters in history. Topics such as slavery, war, child labour, emigration, Universal Declaration of Human Rights etc. are addressed in the senior classes.

### *Geography*

People from other countries, food produced in other countries, cultures, national flags, national dress, terrain and physical geography, climates, etc are covered in all classes to an age-appropriate degree, both in class and project work.

### *Science*

Flora and fauna of other countries, food of other countries, role of environmental protection agencies are explored in class and project work.

### **9.6 Arts education**

### *Visual arts*

The Visual arts programme is influenced by many cultural elements through all curricular strands, and such influences are presented, noted and celebrated.

### *Music*

Music and songs from other countries, pop stars, instruments, folk music, reggae, international aspect of music, freedom songs, labour songs, etc. are covered in all classes throughout the school.

### *Drama*

International, cultural, short stories, enacting, role-play, etc. are all catered for within the curricular programme.

**9.7 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)**

Many opportunities for development awareness of respect and celebration of diversity are presented under the strands Myself and others, Myself and the wider world and the strand unit Media education.

**9.8 Physical Education (PE)**

PE includes celebration of famous sports persons and events, e.g. Olympics, World Cup sports, etc.

**10. Success criteria**

Some practical indicators of the success of the policy will include

* awareness of language of rights, of concept of equality and justice;
* reduction in incidents of bullying/racist incidents;
* pupils having and using appropriate language;
* all pupils having access to all areas of the curriculum and school life at a level appropriate to their needs;
* improvement in pupil attainment levels in curricular areas (especially literacy);
* parental satisfaction with the values being promoted in the school;
* staff and pupils feeling that they are valued.

**11. Ratification and communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management and became official policy from that date. It is available on our school website and a hardcopy is available through the school office.

**12. Implementation date**

This policy was implemented from the date of the Board’s ratification.

**13. Timetable for review**

This policy will be reviewed should particular needs arise and will be fully reviewed in 2023. Co-ordination of this review is the responsibility of the SDP co-ordinator. Those involved in the review will include the BOM, principal, staff/ISM, parent and pupil representatives (as appropriate).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Inclusion Charter

ref *Equality of access and participation, equal opportunities* policy

# Inclusion Charter

## **(ref school’s *Mission Statement* and *Equality of access and participation, equal opportunities* policy)**

This Charter was developed in collaboration between the Board of Management, staff and parents as part of the school’s policy on *Equality of access and participation, equal opportunities*. It specifically reflects the school’s aims, as detailed in its *Mission Statement* and *Equality of access and participation, equal opportunities* policy:

* to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children’s self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation;
* to value uniqueness through each child’s personality, intelligence and development potential;
* to recognise, encourage, and celebrate individual talents, interests and potential;
* to teach the value of mutual support and encouragement;
* to support and help those who find achievement to be more challenging;
* to prioritise children’s special needs, and ensure that they are given the maximum possible attention;
* to promote an understanding and appreciation of the moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural values which shape our society and to foster respect for such values;
* to welcome children from other cultural backgrounds, and to respect and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences.

*(Mission Statement*, St Patrick’s NS)

The school aims to ensure

* that each person in our school feels valued and respected;
* the creation of an environment where diversity is valued and celebrated;
* the provision of equal opportunities for all persons;
* *the preparation of pupils for life in a multicultural society and with an understanding of the value of cultural diversity and a sense of pride in their own culture.*

***St Patrick’s National School***

***Greystones***



***Charter for inclusion***

*Our school is a place where every child*

* *is called by his/her name*
* *is valued for his/her uniqueness*
* *is included in school activities*
* *is safe, happy, friendly and helpful*
* *is heard, and taken seriously*
* *has his/her privacy respected*
* *has his/her belongings respected*
* *respects those around him/her,*

*and their belongings*

* *respects school and other property.*