

Model School Intercultural Policy

■ Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated during a School Development Planning course in July 2008, where all agreed it was necessary to put in place a policy to address the issue of interculturalism in our school and among the school community. Parents were invited to make submissions on the topic. The policy was reviewed in April 2013 in keeping with our general review policy schedule

■ Rationale

This policy was necessary because our school had become more diverse, leading to an increasing challenge with regard to the needs of our pupils, parents and teachers. We felt it was necessary to acknowledge the diversity of our school population, to instil in our pupils the need to respect difference and to facilitate an intercultural curriculum, for the following reasons:

- Schools are social and cultural organisations
- Everyday we experience issues of discrimination, both at school and in the world
- Pupil populations have changed greatly in the recent past with a number of children coming from the international community
- There is evidence of culture stereotyping before age 12, therefore there is a need to address intercultural issues with primary school children
- Children call each other names, sometimes gender or race related (prejudice)
- Children exclude others from play for arbitrary reasons (discrimination)
- Children protest when something is 'not fair' (human rights)
- Children fight (conflict and resolution)
- There are many ties with interculturalism and curricular areas.

■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

The Model School promotes the principles of equality and respect in all aspects of education and supports the concept of equal access to full education for all our pupils. As we aim to aid the full and harmonious development of each child, we feel that adopting an intercultural approach to education can best facilitate this. This approach will span all curricular and organisational areas of school life. We deem this to be of value to all our children, parents, staff and community.

This school is an equal opportunity employer. In accordance with our ethos, we will employ any suitably qualified member of the wider community regardless of age, marital status, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or membership of Traveller community.

■ Aims

By adopting an Intercultural Approach to Education we hope to:

- Develop in each child a respect for self and for others
- Promote a sense of social responsibility and justice
- Develop an appreciation of difference
- Ensure all children feel valued and has a sense of who they are
- Contribute to students' awareness of their own culture

- Recognise and value the symbolic role of the presence of other languages in the school
- Provide opportunities for communication regardless of first language and enhance social skills
- Develop a sense of enquiry in our pupils, teachers and parents
- Promote critical thinking on equality and cultural issues
- Introduce the ideas of cultural identities, conflict and conciliation
- Challenge the socially biased and ethnocentric foci of students and teachers
- Recognise the value of different cultures in a way that enhances the status of migrant cultures
- Introduce children to the idea of political issues and their involvement with them
- Promote a pluralistic approach to the acquisition of knowledge

■ Guidelines

1. School Ethos

Our school ethos reflects our approach to education. Our ethos will underpin all school activity and lay the foundations for all policies formulated forthwith.

2. Enrolment

Our enrolment is in line with the Education Act (1998). We welcome all pupils to enrol in our school for as long as space allows. No child will be denied access because of a disability, race, cultural background, first language, country of origin, ethnicity, gender or religious belief. **For further details please refer to Enrolment Policy.**

If any parent does not understand the enrolment form, every effort will be made to have it translated into the appropriate language. When children whose first language is not English are enrolled they will generally be placed in an age-appropriate class. However, when a child does not have command of the English language or does not have a history of schooling, it is often more appropriate to place him/her in a class below to facilitate language development.

3. Dealing with Racist Incidents (c/f Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy)

The Model School promotes the principles of equality and respect in all aspects of education and supports the concept of equal access to full education for all our pupils. Any breach of this ethos is in fact a breach of school rules as laid out in the **Code of Behaviour**. Name calling of any description is not tolerated.

For the purpose of this policy, the term '*racism*' is used to describe any form of discrimination against a person in the school on the grounds of their cultural background, skin colour or religious belief. It portrays a 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. It reinforces relationships of unequal power.

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

In dealing with racist incidents the following procedure will be adhered to:

- The child who reports the incident will be listened to
- The perpetrator will be asked to recount his/her version of the story
- If necessary, witnesses will be questioned
- The perpetrator will be talked to by both the class teacher and teacher on yard supervision to ensure the following
 - a) he/she understands why the behaviour is unacceptable
 - b) he/she understands how this incident affects the victim,
 - c) he/she is given the opportunity to reflect on the incident and is given a chance to suggest a way of resolving the conflict.
- Any of the sanctions as laid out in the COB can be used e.g. writing an apology and having it signed by parents, writing to explain why this behaviour is unacceptable. As such an incident is a breach of the COB, it may be discussed at circle time and may result in the perpetrator losing privileges.
- The victim will be talked to by the class teacher and/or principal to ensure the victim understands that
 - a) the behaviour was unacceptable,
 - b) the behaviour was not tolerated by the school
 - c) measures would be taken to make amends.
- The class teacher will record any such instances in the appropriate classroom/yard record.
- If a child is reported to be involved in **repeated** racist incidents, the parents of this child will be invited into the school and the matter will be discussed. The teacher will record this information in the child's file.

This procedure mirrors the breach of any school rules as laid out in the **Code of Behaviour**. This COB has been ratified by the BOM of Model School and has been given to each parent at enrolment.

4. Home-School Links/Parental Involvement:

It is appreciated that healthy home-school links are central to the success of this intercultural policy, as with all policies. To enhance home-school links this school makes all parents feel equally welcome.

- All parents can approach the class teacher with regard to any concerns they have.
- Parents are requested to make an appointment to facilitate an adequate discussion of the concern.

5. School Policies

In drawing up school policies, The Model School seeks contributions from parents where appropriate. We consider the intercultural implications of all our policies. When policies are brought to completion, parents will be notified that they are available for viewing in the office when an appointment is made. International parents are welcome to bring an interpreter.

6. Language Acquisition:

When international parents enrol their child in the school, details will be taken of the first language of the child. The Language Support teacher may advise parents on the following

good practice as documented by the INTO:

- Children should continue to use their first language at home
- Children will be given a settling in period before they are requested to participate in all oral language activities in the class.
- Children who share the same first language 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 language (e.g. hello, thank you, please, goodbye). This will only be requested when the teacher deems the child ready.
- Irish will not be taught to the international child for their initial settling in period
- The pupil will be supported in acquiring English by attending special classes with our Language Support Teacher.
- As this school deems it crucial that the child maintains a link between their first language/culture in the school environment, every effort will be made to encourage the child and parents to share this with us as a school community. Parents are invited to contribute and share their culture with the school community on Multicultural Day, which is held annually. Individual teachers will identify other opportunities where sharing of culture can be accommodated as they teach the curriculum.

Where possible, festivals relevant to our pupil population will be acknowledged by the school community. We are aware that it may take several years for teachers to learn the subtleties of such celebrations. World festivals may be taught as part of the SPHE or/and Religious Education programme.

7. Homework:

International children will be given homework suitable to their needs. They may be given handwriting practice (where they have learnt a different script), revision of basic sight words, to draw a picture instead of a writing activity. As much support as possible will be sought from the parents to facilitate maximum learning for the child. Where possible, parents will be encouraged to look at the child's textbooks and copies and teach elements of different subjects in the child's first language.

Once the international children have attained a proficient level of English, they will be requested to attempt the homework as set out for that particular class.

Where the language teacher/learning support/resource teacher give homework this will be communicated to the class teacher and will take priority over the homework as assigned by the class teacher. The class teacher will adjust homework accordingly.

8. Attendance:

The attendance issues as presented in the Education Welfare Act (2000) will be brought to the attention of enrolling international parents and will be reinforced by the HSC Liaison teacher. The procedure for dealing with absenteeism and our strategies for encouraging attendance are laid out in our **Attendance Policy**.

9. Uniform:

All children are requested to wear the full school uniform at all times. The school keeps a supply of used second hand uniforms in good condition which refugee, asylum seekers or any child suffering financial hardship may avail off should the parent wish. If a parent wishes their child to wear a cultural garment with the uniform or instead of the uniform, the BOM will be consulted prior to consent being granted.

10. School Booklet/Information Booklet:

Our school booklet is issued to all parents at the start of each school year, or at enrolment. We consider the booklet an essential reference book for parents as it contains:

Names of Staff

School Hours

Our Vision Statement

Aims of the School

General Information: which gives brief information on the following:

- Enrolment
- School Uniform
- Attendance/Absences
- School Lunches
- School Books
- Transport
- Parent/Teacher Meetings
- Learning Support
- Religious Education
- Curricular Areas
- Special Events
- Parents Association
- Policy for Resolution of Disputes
- Home-School Links Policy
- Homework Policy
- Plan for Social, Personal and Health Education
- Substance Use Policy
- School Rules
- Code of Behaviour and Discipline
- Handwriting Policy

This booklet is revised and updated regularly.

11. Special Needs:

The staff of The Model School appreciate the culture shock that international children face and the challenge of assimilation into the Irish Educational System. It is further acknowledged that children who flee from their home country seeking asylum are dealing with added trauma.

Where a psychological assessment is deemed necessary the procedure as laid out in the **Special**

Needs/Learning Support Policy will be followed.

12. Curriculum:

All children have access to all areas of the curriculum. Non-English speaking children will be exempt from Irish during an induction period. Parents have the right to absent their child from religious education, with prior consent. Parents also have the right to absent their child from some elements of the RSE programme at senior level.

No child will be eliminated from activities, competitions or projects due to their race or religious belief.

From time to time this school aims to teach about other world religions. This is deemed most appropriate to fifth and sixth class. The resource About Me About Us, compiled by local teachers, will be used in the teaching of these modules.

Most curricular plans have an intercultural component, mentioned under 'CONTENT' and 'METHODOLOGIES'.

13. Success Criteria

We will deem this policy successful if the following criteria is fulfilled:

- Few or no racist incidences as noted collectively by staff
- An improvement in school attendance in some international children as identified by staff
- An increase in the number of parents (particularly international parents) attending parent teacher meetings, parent association meetings and general school meetings/activities.
- An increased instance of varied language usage within the school – posters, labels, notices, songs, poems and conversations in languages other than English

14. Roles and Responsibility

It is the overall responsibility of the entire staff to ensure that these guidelines are implemented throughout the school.

15. Timetable for Implementation

The decisions as laid out in this policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management.

All teachers will plan accordingly for each school year taking account of the decisions laid out in this policy.

16. Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years and any amendments noted

17. Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the BOM on 15th May 2013

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management