



Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
Baile Stiofáin, Baile Brigín, Co. BÁC

School Policy for
Equality

Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to inform current and future parents and staff members about the efforts made in Scoil Chormaic CNS to achieve equality for all members of the school community and to reduce incidents of discrimination. The school fully implements its Anti-Bullying Policy and all incidences of discrimination are dealt with according to the procedures outlined in that. This policy was devised by members of the In-School Leadership Team. It was then discussed by all staff members. It was then placed on the school website and incoming and current parents were invited to give feedback on the policy. The policy was then discussed with the school's board of management and ratified.

Rationale:

Scoil Chormaic CNS is a multidenominational school that caters for children of all beliefs/faiths and none. The school takes an inclusive approach to education. Inclusive education affirms pluralism across differences in culture, gender, ability, beliefs/faiths, class, age, race, sexual orientation and family circumstances. Teaching diverse traditions and perspectives, questioning stereotypes, learning the appropriate cultural codes in order to function within a variety of settings, recognising the contributions of all groups in society (especially those who have been traditionally excluded) and eliminating negative biases are all seen as important daily practices.

The Mission Statement of Community National Schools is as follows:

Our mission is to provide a new model of primary education that reflects Ireland in the 21st Century. Community National Schools provide a welcome to each child in the community we serve and create a learning environment based on diversity and inclusion. Our schools cater for the physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs of children within the school day in a supportive and caring environment.

At the centre of the ethos of Scoil Chormaic CNS is inclusion and equality. All aspects of our children's identity are equally important. The school takes a sociocultural approach to education, where teachers take into account the experiences and identity of their children when planning their lessons. The school also takes a proactive rather than a reactive approach against discrimination of all forms. It is committed to educating the children about the possible types of discrimination and the impacts they have on individuals. To focus this commitment, we take into consideration the nine grounds of the Equal status Acts 2000 and 2004, namely:

- Gender (including transgender)
- Civil Status

- Family Status
- Age
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Membership of the Travelling Community

Scoil Chormaic CNS is an equal opportunities employer. Candidates for all positions in the school will not be discriminated against on any of these grounds. However, all potential employees of the school must hold the relevant academic qualifications and undergo a rigorous recruitment and Garda Vetting process.

Scoil Chormaic CNS' Approach to the Nine Grounds of Discrimination.

By using these nine grounds on which it is unlawful to discriminate in the Republic of Ireland, we are sending a clear message that any form of discrimination will not be tolerated in the school and, in doing so, fulfil our legal obligation to the pupils, staff and parents of our school.

All members of our school community have the right to feel safe and welcome and achieve to the best of their potential, regardless of their actual or perceived differences in ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion, sexual orientation, belief/faith tradition or language.

In order to achieve this, the children in Scoil Chormaic CNS are educated about each of the nine grounds during their eight years in the school. The children learn about their rights and the rights of every other human being. Human Rights is seen as an opportunity to educate the children about different forms of diversity and discrimination. The school takes a spiral approach¹ to the teaching about the nine grounds and previously covered work will be revised and developed. Community National Schools celebrate diversity in all its forms throughout the school year. The following are **some** of the practical ways we approach each of the nine grounds of discrimination in the school.

Gender (Including Transgender):

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment whether they are a man, woman or a transgender person.

Gender equality is the concept that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different

¹ Topics are returned to again and again as the children get older but at a deeper level.

behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered and valued equally. Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making.

Ireland was recently ranked 8th best out of 142 countries in a gender gap survey from the World Economic Forum which looked at gaps between men and women in health, education, the economy and politics. By instilling in our children from a very young age a deep respect for the equal roles of both men and women, we are playing our part in closing that gap.

Some of the measures we take to ensure this are:

- Scoil Chormaic CNS is a co-educational school which gives equal access to boys and girls.
- Girls and boys are given equal access to all educational resources and after-school clubs.
- In history, children learn about both male and female key historical figures.
- From time to time, the school will undertake a 'gender audit' using the 'Equal Measures' resource kit to ensure that gender equality is represented in both our formal² and hidden curricula³.
- Children learn about stereotypes and how it is not appropriate to categorise people broadly. Examples of these stereotypes are:
 - Girls are better at writing than boys.
 - Boys are better at maths than girls.
 - Girls like to play with dolls and boys like to play with cars.
 - Boys wear dark colours and girls wear bright colours.
 - Mums stay at home to mind children while dads go out to work.
- The school uniform is not specific to boys and girls. Children, with parental consent, are free to choose which uniform they would like to wear.
- Inclusive language is used in the school e.g. firefighter instead of fireman, chairperson instead of chairman.

Civil Status:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment whether they are single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, in a civil partnership or previously in a civil partnership. Families in Ireland today are very diverse, consisting of mother and father headed families, single-parent families, families headed by members of the extended family, step-parent families, adoptive and foster families, families headed by cohabiting couples, bereaved families, adult-only families, families from different cultures and ethnicities, mixed-belief/faith families and same sex headed families. The most recent census in 2016, revealed the following figures in relation to the Republic of Ireland:

² The formal curriculum refers to the lessons and methodologies used by teachers.

³ The hidden curriculum refers to the images used in the school environment, books, ethos, teacher attitude, etc. (See Appendix 1 for a list of some of our library books that are representative of the diversity in our community.)

- o Divorced couples – 103,800
- o Separated couples – 118,200
- o Lone parents – 218,817
- o Cohabiting Units – 598,700
- o Gay and Lesbian Couples – 6,034

Children in our school come from all different types of families. They will also grow up to form different types of families. Families are central to the formation of children's identity and are the primary lens through which they view the world. 'Myself and My Family' is a core strand unit of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum, as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills (DES, 1999). It is vitally important that all children see their families represented in the school.

"When someone, with the authority of a teacher say, describes the world and you're not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing."

Adrienne Rich

Some of the ways we try to ensure that all families in our school are equally respected are as follows:

- We address different family types through age-appropriate discussions and activities that help promote a more respectful environment in our school.
- We look at different family types in our SPHE lessons.
- All family types are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula.
- When teachers talk about diverse family types, they will do so by roughly following this outline:

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Some families have a mother, some have a father, some have a mother and a father, some have two mothers, some have two fathers, some children live with other family members like grandparents or aunts and uncles while some families have no children (just grown-ups). Some children are born into their family while others are adopted or fostered. Sometimes families live together and sometimes they might live in different places. A family is when people love and take care of each other.

Family Status:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment whether they are pregnant, a parent of a child under 18 years, or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability. Even though legally children under 18 years old are not entitled to the same treatment as an adult, our aim in school is to promote the valuable voice of children.

Some of the ways the children are taught about this ground are:

- Children are taught at an age-appropriate level about how people may experience discrimination because of their family status.
- Different family circumstances are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula.

Age:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment if they are any age over 18 (The age ground only applies to young people under 18 if they hold a driver's licence and are buying car insurance.)

Some of the ways the children are taught about the value of all people of all ages are:

- They are taught from Junior Infants how they grow and change throughout their lives. They discuss, in a positive manner, the different roles people can play in society at different stages of their lives. The focus here is that children begin to understand that very few roles are age specific.
- The children are taught that even though they are young, they are equally as important as those who are older than them.
- The types of discrimination that all members of society could possibly face are discussed with the children at an age appropriate level.
- People of all ages in all types of roles are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula. We invite older relatives and friends of the children into the school on different occasions. Our Green School, Active School and Well-Being committees include adults and children from all year groups. The children are active agents in the development of school rules and charters.

Race/Ethnicity:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment no matter what their race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin is.

Scoil Chormaic CNS values the richness that comes from children being educated in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

The school takes a proactive rather than a reactive approach to teaching children about race and ethnicity in the following ways:

- Children are taught from Junior Infants the value of all forms of diversity.
- Children of all ethnicities are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula. Every effort is made to ensure that different ethnic groups are not

essentialised⁴ by these books and images. Teachers are mindful of showing the diversity that exists within ethnic groups in their classrooms.

- Teachers have access to 'The Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School' to help them create a welcoming classroom for all pupils, including children from ethnic and linguistic minorities. Dual language books are available in the school library.
- We will have an Intercultural Week in the school where children look closely at what they are most proud of in relation to their own cultural heritage and their shared Irish cultural identity. Scoil Chormaic CNS recognises the importance of a child's first language.

Religion:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment no matter what their religious beliefs, including those who don't hold any religious belief.

Scoil Chormaic CNS is a multidenominational school that aims to cater for children of all beliefs. In our school we have children from a variety of beliefs, Church of Ireland, Christian Orthodox, Catholic, Islam, Hinduism and children of no faith.

The children are taught about the diversity of religious and secular beliefs in the following ways:

- Children of all beliefs/faiths and none have equal opportunities of gaining a place in the school as per our enrolment policy.
- The children are taught the Goodness Me! Goodness You! multi-belief programme. This programme aims to nourish the child's own belief/faith while at the same time giving them a deeper understanding of the beliefs/faiths of their peers.
- Children are given opportunities to engage in inter-belief dialogue with their peers. This enables children to develop the skills necessary to engage with those who may have different beliefs/faiths and worldviews than their own in a respectful manner.
- Children from different belief/faith traditions are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula.

Disability:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment including those who have a disability, for example, physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional. Disability could also mean that someone suffers from a particular medical

⁴ Essentialism is where groups of people are thought to be all the exact same as they belong to, for example, a certain ethnic, cultural or religious group.

condition.

Scoil Chormaic CNS ensures that children develop positive attitudes towards people with disabilities in the following ways:

- Children with all forms of disability are given equal access to the school. Once enrolled in the school, every effort is made to ensure that the children have equal access to educational resources, activities and after-school clubs.
- Children discuss a disability of a child in the school in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. The children learn to empathise with children with disabilities and treat them with the same dignity and respect as all other children in the school.
- Where possible we aim to make the school building accessible to people with a physical disability. People with various physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula.
- Members of the school community are mindful of the language they use around children with a disability. The fact that they are a child always comes first. The language that best describes their particular disability follows e.g. _____ is a child with Autism, _____ is a child with Downs Syndrome.

Sexual Orientation:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

Research carried out in Ireland shows that in Irish schools:

- 12 years of age is the most common age for a child to become aware of their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) identity.
- The most common age that a young person will tell another person that they are LGBT is 17 years old which is on average 5 years after they first realised themselves.
- There are on average 1 or 2 pupils in every class that will become members of the LGB community. More than half of LGBT students have been called abusive names by fellow students – 40% have been verbally threatened.
- One quarter of LGBT students have been physically threatened by other students. 1 in 5 LGBT students have missed school because they feared being threatened or hurt because of their LGBT identity.
- 5% of LGBT students leave school early because of the treatment they receive as a consequence of their LGBT identity.
- Out of a sample of over 1100 LGBT people, 18% had attempted suicide. The average age of first suicide attempt was 17.5 years old. The average

age for first self-harm was 16 years old. 4 out of every 5 teachers are aware of the problem of homophobic name-calling. 9 out of 10 say that lack of policy hinders them in tackling the issue.

- In schools that have clearly said homophobic bullying is wrong, LGB young people are 60% more likely not to have been bullied.

In order to ensure that current and future members of the LGBT community feel fully welcomed and respected, the school does the following:

- Training has been and will continue to be provided to staff members by Teni Ireland.

Members of the Travelling Community:

According to the Equal Status Act 2000/2004, everyone is entitled to equal treatment including members of the Traveller community that share the traditions and culture of Travellers in Ireland.

According to the census of 2011, there are just under 30,000 Travellers living in the Republic of Ireland. The census also revealed that 17 was the age by which 90% of Irish Travellers ceased their full time education, compared with 24 for the general population. Only 115 Irish Travellers had completed third level education in 2011. There are many social factors to be considered when looking at these statistics. However, part of the reason for the reduced engagement from Irish Travellers in education is their lack of representation in the school environment. We promote a positive attitude towards Travellers in our school in the following ways:

- Our enrollment policy welcomes Members of the Travelling Community.
- Members of the Travelling Community are represented in the school's formal and hidden curricula. Teachers are mindful of the external factors that may affect the educational attainment of Traveller children. However, they have high expectations of children from the Travelling Community and every effort is made to ensure that they reach their full potential.
- Every effort will be made to give the children of Scoil Chormaic CNS an understanding of Traveller culture and customs. If possible, members of the Travelling Community will be invited in to speak with the children.

Role of Parents/Guardians:

Although this policy lists some of the ways that the various grounds are dealt with, none of the lists are exhaustive. Some grounds have been given more attention in this policy than others simply because some require further clarification than others and are more

appropriate to be addressed in the primary school.

The role of the parents and guardians in relation to this policy cannot be underestimated. It is expected that parents choosing to send their child to Scoil Chormaic Community National School will adhere to this policy. Although some elements of this policy may not be in line with certain privately held beliefs, it is imperative that all members of the school community understand that prejudice or discrimination in any form will not be tolerated in the school. Although the school cannot accommodate people who discriminate against a person based on any, or a combination of these grounds (intersectional discrimination), we are happy to support any member of the school community in helping them to reflect on their own prejudices, with a view to helping them to support the inclusive ethos of the school.

Other Relevant Policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Complaints Procedures for Parents
- Enrolment Policy

Useful Websites:

www.genderequality.ie (gender)

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Equal-Measures.pdf> (gender)

www.ageaction.ie (age)

www.gmgry.ie (religion/belief)

www.enableireland.ie (disability)

www.disability.ie (disability)

www.ncse.ie (disability)

www.lgbt.ie (sexual orientation)

www.glen.ie (sexual orientation)

www.paveepoint.ie (membership of the Travelling Community)

www.culturewise.ie (race)

<http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/intercultural.pdf>

(Intercultural Guidelines)

www.cns.ie (equality)

www.equality.ie (equality)

Ratification and communication

This policy has been communicated directly to staff in the course of staff meeting, and will be made available electronically also. A hard copy will be available alongside other school policies. The policy will be reviewed no later than June 2023.

Signed by

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Principal of Scoil Chormaic CNS

Appendix 1

Books Representing Diversity in our Community

It is intended that the diversity that exists in relation to cultural, linguistic, religious, family types etc. in this school and in wider society is reflected in both formal and hidden curricula. As our language policy states, we take a sociocultural approach to education which is relevant to the children in our classes. In an effort to support teachers in such an approach, we have invested in books that we hope will reflect the diversity of the

children in our school.

The books listed below are under 3 broad categories:

1. Intercultural Diversity
2. Family diversity and gender stereotyping
3. Diversity of ability

Examples of books in the Resource Room:

- Each Kindness- Jacqueline Woodson/ E.B. Lewis
- King & King- de Haan/ Nijland
- The Book of Languages- Watts
- How we get around- Ellen Lawrence
- Everybody needs water- Ellen Lawrence
- Time for School- Ellen Lawrence
- The Clothes we wear- Ellen Lawrence
- Time to Play- Ellen Lawrence
- Celebrations and special days- Ellen Lawrence
- Waiting- Greenwillow
- Mama Miti- Napoli Nelson
- The Island- Armin Greder
- Azizi and the Little Blue Bird- Laila Koubaa & Mattias De Leeuw
- Counting Lions- Cotton/Walton
- The Other Side- Woodson/Lewis
- A story of the Holocaust- Terezing
- Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote- Tonotiu
- The Obstinate Pen- Dormer
- Last stop on market street- Matt de la Pena/ Christian Robinson
- The Colour of Home- Hoffman/ Littlewood
- Avocado Baby- John Burningham
- Here I am- Patti Kim and Sonia Sanchez
- Imaginary Fred- Eoin Colfer/ Oliver Seffers
- My Grandfather's Coat- Aylesworth/ Mc Clintock
- Seperate is never Equal- Tonatium
- Handa's Surprise – Eileen Brownie
- Tale of two Beasts- Fiona Robertson
- Mama's Nintingale- Danticat/ Staub
- Freedom Summer- Wiles/ Lagarrigue
- A time of Waiting: Stories from around the world
- Footpath Flowers- Lawson/ Smith
- Meg and the Dragon- Jan Pienkowski and David Walser
- Dreams of Freedom- Amnesty International

- One Day- Suma Din/ Christiane Engel
- I have the right to be a child- Alain Serres/ Aurelia Fronty
- One Plastic Bag- Paul/ Zunon