

Policy on Equal Opportunity & Gender Equity

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 a collaborative exercise between staff, Board of Management, parents and children.

Rationale:

The policy was re-drafted because;

- The existing policy was reviewed in 2004 and required updating
- 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 Milford National School

Links to School Ethos:

Milford National School 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 school's mission statement promotes the spirit of inclusiveness and the principles of equality.

Aims and Objectives:

- To instil 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 or disability. 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:

Communication with all parents is made through newsletters, notices, homework diaries, verbal contact, the school web-site and Text-a-Parent (and sometimes by e-mail). The staff is made aware also of the different cultural practices of international parents/children through verbal/written communication.

The school has a policy of communicating with both parents on pupil progress where divorce or separation is an issue, unless a court ruling prescribes differently. Parents in this situation should communicate the separate contact details to the school.

Input of Parents:

The Parents Association of the school has an input into the formulation of the Equality Policy. The BoM and Parents Association refers all parents to the Education Welfare Act 2000.

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 infant 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, SNAs 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 basketball, football, camogie etc in a manner which is favourable to all sexes, races and religions. Class allocation is on a non-academic, gender-balance basis. 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 a curriculum which shall enable pupils to engage in appropriate intellectually stimulating work. All children are given an opportunity to engage in integration and an appreciation of other cultures and languages.

Special arrangements are made for children of non-nationals and children with specific learning difficulties in relation 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. S.P.H.E strands such as 'Myself and Others' are also used to celebrate different cultures.

Special Needs:

The school has a complement of 5 full time teachers on the LST/RT team. It has also been sanctioned 15 hours a week EAL (English as an Additional Language) to help children for whom English is not their first language. Children with special needs in mainstream have access to learning support and resource hours in addition to full time mainstream integration. The school also has 5.66 SNAs at present.

Evaluation of Policy:

The policy is subject to continual review under the following;

- All pupils accessing the curriculum at a level appropriate to their needs
- Increased awareness of difference 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 reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 24.03.2010 and implemented immediately. It was reviewed in March 2013.