

Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS

Policy on Equal Opportunity & Gender Equity

Introduction

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 person's participation in school life

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents/guardians drew up this Policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity. The document 'equal measures' (DES, 2006) was used to support the formulation of the policy.

Rationale

The policy was re-drafted for the following reasons:

- The existing policy was scheduled for review by the Board of Management
- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
 - The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Board wishes to promote the principles of justice and equality within the school community.
- The Board wishes to promote an awareness of gender issues and to support the ongoing development of an inclusive school.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS is a Catholic school for girls. The 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 respect for all and by valuing each member of the school community. The school's mission statement promotes the spirit of inclusiveness and the principles of equality.

Aims

- To enable all pupils to access and participate in education
- To promote equality of opportunity and gender equity in an environment where diversity is respected, valued and celebrated
- To instil a sense of pride in the Irish culture, while cultivating an understanding of and respect for the value of cultural diversity
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Content

Enrolment

The school's Enrolment and Admissions Policy is available in the School Office and on the school's website for any parent/guardian who wishes to read it. The school's Parents' Association is informed of any amendments or changes to the policy.

Enrolment is open to girls, regardless of race, religion, family status, disability, sexual orientation or whether or not they are a member of the Travelling Community. Places in the school will be allocated in accordance with the terms of the school's Enrolment and Admissions Policy.

Employment

The Board of Management is an equal opportunities employer, in compliance with the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, and the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004.

The Board will adhere to the correct procedures for appointment and promotion, as outlined in the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019 (DES, 2015). No discriminatory questions on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, family status, etc. will be asked during the interview process. Fair and equitable measures will apply in relation to maternity leave, career breaks, etc.

Communication

The school has a high percentage of International Pupils. Whenever possible, information booklets and enrolment forms are provided to parents/guardians in their first language.

Verbal communication is the preferred method of communication with parents/guardians whose first language is not English and with parents who have literacy difficulties. The staff is also made aware of the different cultural practices of these parents/children through verbal communication.

Links to the Community

- ***Parents/Guardians***

Both parents/guardians are invited to and encouraged to attend the Annual General Information Meeting at the start of the school year, and the individual P/T meetings in Term 2. Whenever possible, the school has a policy of communicating with both parents/guardians on pupil progress where divorce or separation is an issue, unless a court

ruling prescribes differently. If requested, separate meetings are arranged with separated parents/guardians.

The Parents' Association is encouraged by the Board of Management and the Principal to work towards a gender balance in the committee.

- ***Community***

The school seeks, as far as possible, to have a gender balance when involving volunteers, and all communication seeking volunteers is addressed to both Mums and Dads.

Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy

The school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy promotes respect for all and outlines procedures to deal with any breach of the policy.

Homework

The school's Homework Policy addresses issues in relation to pupils with special needs, pupils whose first language is not English and the involvement of parents/guardians. Both Mums and Dads are encouraged to engage in homework activities with the children.

Resources

Posters on display in the school support the principles and the practice of equality. There are books in the library that explore different cultures, different family structures, and the achievements of both male and female role models. The principles of equality and respect for diversity are reflected in the pupils' textbooks.

School Trips

All pupils have an opportunity to participate in school trips or other outings organised by the school.

Teaching and Learning

All pupils have equal opportunities to experience all aspects of the curriculum, to participate in activities and to use resources. Teaching methodologies, e.g. circle time, co-operative learning, group work, social skills groups, etc. are employed to support integration and promote equality of participation.

The school 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, when they are available, such as language teachers, SNAs and teaching materials. There is regular communication between the class teacher and parents during the child's early school life. Teaching materials acquired are chosen and used in a manner reflecting diversity.

The SPHE programme is explained to parents/guardians on enrolment and parents/guardians are advised when RSE and Stay Safe programmes are being implemented in classrooms..

SESE offers many areas where diversity and differences can be celebrated e.g. 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.

Pupils have opportunities to learn about and to celebrate the many cultures represented in our school through weekly assemblies and through the annual Friendship/Intercultural Week.

Children with learning difficulties and special needs are catered for in accordance with the school's policy on Learning Support.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Pupils participating in all areas of school life at a level appropriate to their abilities
- Pupil, staff and parent/guardian awareness of the concepts of equality and justice
- Pupils using appropriate language
- Parental satisfaction with the values being promoted in the school

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management and communicated to the Parents' Association in May 2017.

Review Date

January 2019