

Policy on Interculturalism

In drafting this policy, the staff referred to the Guidelines for schools; *"Intercultural Education in the Primary School"*.

"Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all." UNESCO conference at Salamanca (1994)

"I am a genuine typical Irishman of the Danish, Norman, Cromwellian and (of course) Scotch invasions." George Bernard Shaw. The diversity found in contemporary Ireland contributes to the richness of our culture today and into the future.

School Ethos:

Each person through positive learning experiences will be stimulated to achieve his/her full potential, face life confidently, find fulfilment and be respectful in an ever-changing world.

Show respect and expect respect.

An intercultural ethos permeates through our school, embracing all cultural minority groups and languages. Embracing other cultures does not dilute the great pride we have in our own Irish heritage and Catholic roots. St. Anne's is an Irish, Catholic school and 'being loyal to' and upholding this identity, while showing respect to all, is at the core of all decisions made by staff and Board of Management.

What is Interculturalism? :

It is education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches us all.

It is education, which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built.

The term 'Interculturalism' expresses a belief that we all become personally enriched by coming in contact with and experiencing other cultures, and that people of different cultures can and should be able to engage with each other and learn from each other.

(Intercultural Education in the Primary School – Guidelines for Schools, pg. 3)

What are the characteristics of Intercultural Education?

"A 'good' education cannot be based on the one culture only ... where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral of the population. We do not believe that education should seek to iron out the differences between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture" Rampton Report in the UK

Intercultural education is for all children. It equips children to participate in an increasingly diverse society. Equally, an education which is based on only one culture will be less likely to develop these capacities in children. Recognising that diversity is normal in humans is something that is appropriate at all ages.

Intercultural education is embedded in knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attitudes and values.

Intercultural education is integrated with all subjects and with the general life of the school.

Intercultural education requires real-world focus.

Language is central to developing intercultural competencies.

Interculturalism is not something extra that teachers must do in an already busy school day – rather it presents a different way of doing the same things. Intercultural education is not an addition to the Primary school curriculum since the curriculum itself is an intercultural curriculum.

The school context is important in facilitating learning. Inclusive environments are characterised by learning environments that reflect and show pride in the language, ethnic and cultural diversity that characterises Ireland. As such, they provide support for the positive self-image of all children irrespective of their ethnicity, as well as reinforcing the normality of diversity for all children. We in St. Anne's ensure that all children irrespective of their colour, ethnic group, or ability can feel at home and represented within the school.

(Intercultural Education in the Primary School – Guidelines for Schools, pgs 20-23)

Rationale:

Over the last number of years the school's population has grown to mirror the changing social environment in the country, an environment rich in cultural diversity, welcoming visitors from all walks of life and all parts of the world.

Approximately 8% of children in the school are foreign born nationals.

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 each child feels 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 mother tongues in the school.
- Provide opportunities for communication regardless of mother tongue 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.

GUIDELINES

Enrolment:

The admissions policy in our school states; "Equality of access is the key value that determines the enrolment of children to our school".

The country of origin of each child and their first language is highlighted on each enrolment form.

All important information regarding newcomers is gathered before the child enters the school in our effort to meet their needs before they begin in the school.

For Example:

- How the names of the child and their parents are properly pronounced?
- What language(s) does the child have, and what is his or her level of proficiency in these languages?
- How does one say some key phrases in the child's first language?
- What is the child's religion, how is it practised, and has this any implications for school and classroom planning?
- Will there be specific issues for children concerning food, jewellery or clothing?
- Are there any cultural practices that might affect classroom interaction? Are there actions which are deemed inappropriate or rude in the child's home (showing someone an open palm or the soles of the foot may be rude in some African cultures; in traveller culture children often speak very directly and openly to adults, something which is sometimes seen as rude in schools; standing close to a person may be deemed rude in some cultures while it may be normal in others.)

Home-School Links/Parental Involvement:

Inclusive schools are characterised by learning environments that reflect and show pride in the language, ethnic and cultural diversity that characterises Ireland. As such, they provide a support for the positive self-image of all children irrespective of their ethnicity, as well as reinforcing the normality of diversity for all children. We will ensure that all children irrespective of their colour, ethnic group, or ability can feel at home and represented within the school.

All parents are encouraged to take an active part in our school community and the Parents Association.

New entrants to the school are introduced with their parents to the school and it is endeavoured that they will be introduced to their new class teacher prior to their arrival.

Every year all parents are encouraged to help out with our school's Sport's Day.

Language Acquisition:

All children are exposed to basic words and phrases of all languages through incidental and structured class time.

When areas of the curriculum are being studied relating to the language, geography and culture of international children, these children are encouraged to elaborate and relay their experiences to their teachers and peers.

All children will learn Irish unless their parent/guardian has requested them to be exempt from same. (See Department Circular 12/96)

Important world festivals are acknowledged and celebrated within the school.

Homework:

The practice in the school is that the class teacher assigns homework to all students. All children, once proficient, are assigned the same homework as their peers, work which is appropriate to their learning abilities. (See Homework Policy)

Attendance:

Issues discussed in the Education Welfare Act, 2000, are brought to the attention of International parents in the school.

Procedures for dealing with absenteeism in the school are standard for all children. (See Attendance Policy)

Uniform:

All children are requested to wear their full school uniform. (See School Uniform Policy)

Any parent who wishes a child to wear a cultural garment, with their uniform or instead of their full uniform, will have their case heard by the Board of Management on an individual basis. Every effort will be made to facilitate them.

Induction of New Pupils:

All children are placed in classes according to their age and not according to their abilities.

Before a child starts in the school, the principal shows the child and their parents around the school, introducing them to their classroom and class teacher.

Teachers will endeavour to sit newcomers beside someone they may already know or a child who will aid the newcomer in the transition to their new environment and class.

New pupils are introduced to classmates as being 'multi-lingual' children as opposed to being 'non-English speaking' children.

Resources:

A vast selection and variety of textbooks, storybooks and toys are available in the school which have been chosen with consideration of the intercultural needs of the school.

Information folders are located in the Resource Room with information on the countries, cultures, religions and languages of all the children attending the school. Dual language books for class libraries will be sourced and available in classrooms.

Staff Development:

Every teacher is aware of all documentation available in the school relating to Intercultural Education. Any training which arises in relation to Intercultural Education will be attended by a member of staff from the school.

Curriculum:

All children have access to all areas of the curriculum but parents may in consultation with the principal, have their children exempted from Religion or Irish classes in line with DES guidelines and our Policies on Religion and Faith Development. The Education Act (1998) does not *"require any student to attend instruction in any subjects which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student."*

In cases where children are granted exemption by the principal from such curricular areas, they remain under the supervision of the class teacher but complete other work which will benefit their learning. For the celebration of Mass/Confessions, arrangements may be made for another staff member other than the classroom teacher to supervise the children not attending. This will depend on human resources available at the time.

Children are encouraged to speak openly in their own classes or other classes when invited, about their religious/cultural beliefs.

When completing the Whole School SESE Plan (Geography) the staff endeavoured, when choosing countries of the world and the E.U., to include countries which represent the international children in our school. In this way, these children can share their experiences with their peers and enjoy imparting knowledge of their 'home' country.

Similarly, during the school year parents are invited to come to speak to classes on various cultural issues arising from the curriculum.

Success Criteria:

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

Children voluntarily and naturally play with children from different cultural backgrounds and voluntarily choose them as their friends.

Racist incidents or remarks are not tolerated by children or staff in St. Anne's.

An improvement in school attendance in Traveller and international children as identified at staff meeting.

An increase in the numbers of parents (particularly Traveller and international parents) attending parent teacher meetings/ parent association meetings/ school meetings.

An increased instance of varied language usage within the school: posters, labels, notices, songs, poems, conversations in languages other than English.

Roles and Responsibilities:

It is the overall responsibility of the principal to ensure that teachers are reminded of the decisions agreed upon as laid out in this policy at regular staff meetings.

Each class teacher will have specific duties for the implementation of these decisions in his/her classroom.