EQUALITY POLICY

Rationale

Sandymount School community acknowledges that bullying, racism and discrimination can and do happen. They are major causes of distress and can lead to serious difficulties in all aspects of life. We are committed to developing positive behaviour and promoting justice and equality for all. We will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour or attitudes and we will always challenge discrimination in any form.

Aim

Our aim is to create an ethos of mutual respect and positive relationships so that pupils, staff and parents feel safe, valued, included, supported and respected in our school and successful learning and teaching can thrive.

Objectives

- To promote equal opportunities and good relationships within the school community
- To celebrate diversity, remove barriers to learning and encourage all in the school to achieve their full potential
- To present a consistent and coherent approach to challenging bullying, racism and discrimination
- To support the children in identifying and challenging unacceptable behaviours and attitudes and in choosing positive ones

Definitions

Bullying
Bullying is an abuse of power. People who are bullied are likely to be seriously upset by something someone else has done or said to them. They may fear that this will happen again and they may feel powerless to stop it happening. There are many different ways in which people can bully others. Sometimes groups do it and sometimes it is done by just one person. There are sometimes other people who are not involved directly but who know what is going on. Fights between people of approximately equal power and random attacks by strangers are serious, but they are not bullying. Neither is the proper exercise of power by people in positions of authority.   (Anti Bullying Network)

Discrimination
An incident of discrimination or harassment is not the same as an incident of bullying. The closest definition to be used is that applied to racism. This would indicate that a person is being adversely treated or offended on the grounds of their disability, gender, religion or faith or their sexual orientation. Insulting someone as an 'illegal immigrant' or 'gay' regardless of their actual identity is included in this definition.

Racism

A Racist incident is defined in law as 'any incident in which someone involved ('victim', 'perpetrator', 'witness' or person to whom the incident was reported) believes there to have been a racial motivation'. This legal definition enables all allegations to be treated seriously from the outset.

All such incidents must be investigated and then recorded in the same way as bullying incidents. With children and young people, the investigation can range from a conversation to a full, time-consuming inquiry, depending on the circumstances. If, following the conversation the young person and/or others involved no longer consider the incident to be racist, then no record need be made. If, however, following a conversation or discussion, there is uncertainty in anyone's mind as to whether or not the incident was of a racist nature, then this should be recorded on the incidents form.

Imbalance or Abuse of Power can take many forms. It may be quantitative (eg two on one, older on younger), emotional (confident or aggressive over unconfident or passive) or on the basis of physical ability, gender or sexual orientation. It might also manifest in isolating others.

Curriculum

- Equalities education means learning and teaching about developing positive attitudes and relationships, about discrimination in its different forms, about dealing with and challenging discrimination and about celebrating similarities and differences within our diverse society.

- Equalities education is taught within the SPHE curriculum and is also integrated into other curricular areas. Staff take a proactive approach to reinforcing the message. This means that as well as teaching about attitudes and behaviours in SPHE and Circle time activities, staff look for opportunities in other curricular areas to explore the issues involved, including stereotyping. For example, in history; war crimes against Jews in WW2, attitudes towards women in Victorian times, to minorities in the highland clearances. Lessons in reading, drama, music and so on all offer opportunities for equalities education. Playground initiatives, such as co-operative games, are also used to promote inclusion and challenge negative attitudes.

- Staff respond to incidents involving their pupils, as these arise, and support the children in trying to resolve issues.

- At the start of each session, all classes study a short, two-week anti-bullying and friendship topic. Each class has a pack of resources for this topic, appropriate to the age and stage of the children. School Assemblies are linked to this theme. Teachers are encouraged to have an Anti-Bullying Week where we revisit the topic.

- The school promotes an inclusive curriculum, which aspires to reflect the diverse nature of our society.

- The school monitors and evaluates its effectiveness in providing an appropriate curriculum for all pupils.

Attainment

- Pupils' attainment and progress is monitored across all stages and we are able to track progress of children by ethnicity and gender.

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- The school values the achievements and progress of pupils from all ethnic groups, from both boys and girls and from children with additional support needs. The school values a wide range of achievements, not just academic success.

- All pupils have access to extra-curricular activities. This means that, while some clubs or activities are designed for children of a particular age, no child is excluded on the grounds of gender, race, ability or religious belief.

Learning and Teaching

- The allocation of pupils to teaching groups is fair and equitable to all pupils and we take care to offer pupils the support and guidance they need.

- Our Behavioural Policy sets out our aims and guidelines for promoting a positive ethos, learning and teaching about managing feelings and relationships with others and encouraging good behaviour. It sets out clear guidelines for teaching about good behaviour, rewards and sanctions in place and ways of supporting children who find managing behaviour challenging.

- Teaching methods and styles take account of the needs of all pupils.

- All parents are regularly informed of their child's progress.

Support for Pupils

- The school operates a set of procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying, racism and discrimination, see below. Staff, pupils and parents are informed of the procedures and encouraged to report any such incidents to an appropriate member of staff.

- Support is offered to all pupils involved; victims, perpetrators and witnesses, where appropriate.

- The language and learning needs of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with additional support needs are identified and appropriate support is sought and used.

- The school makes full use of partner agencies and outside bodies to support pupils and to provide advice and/or additional educational programmes.

Recording and Monitoring Incidents

- We will always respond to any incident or allegation made by pupils, staff or parents. All incidents are treated seriously and are investigated.

- Where an incident of bullying, racism or discrimination is found, the Principal takes action as appropriate with the children involved and communicates with parents. Action may include: separation of pupils, written apologies, exclusion from the playground, circle times, referral to partner agencies, eg Educational Psychologist, behaviour monitoring sheets or even exclusion.

- Follow-up work is undertaken with the children to ensure that all involved are supported appropriately.

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- Instances of bullying, racism and discrimination are recorded and reported to the council, as required.

Resources

- Anti-discrimination resources are held centrally in the school's resource library.

- Many websites have excellent on-line resources.

Responsibilities

Pupils have a responsibility to take part in appropriate differentiated Equalities Education lessons and activities and to follow the school's positive behaviour policy and guidelines.

Parents have a responsibility to support their child, to support and respect the dignity of other children and to support the school ethos, rules and discipline procedures

All staff, including visiting and supply staff, office and housekeeping staff, support and teaching staff, share responsibility for promoting the Equalities Policy throughout the school's shared areas including corridors, halls and school grounds. All staff need to be aware of the implications of council and school policy and are involved in the implementation process. All staff are encouraged to attend courses through the CPD framework.

Class teachers ensure the policy is implemented fairly and consistently and keep appropriate records. Class teachers ensure that equalities education is integrated into the curriculum and opportunities are provided for all pupils to explore issues of attitudes and behaviours, including developing the skills and confidence to challenge bullying, racism and discrimination.

The Principal assists and supports staff in implementing the policy, liaises with staff, pupils and parents, monitors and records incidents and referrals and identifies and arranges for staff development. This includes arranging follow-up work to be undertaken with children and liaising with staff from other agencies, where appropriate. It also includes purchasing and distributing resources to support learning and teaching and advising staff where appropriate. The co-ordinator keeps abreast of new developments and ensures that staff are well informed.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Signed: _____   Signed: _____

    (Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

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