

Equality of Access and Participation Policy

This policy is devised to ensure equality of access for all pupils and staff in the school environment and to ensure that no conditions be allowed which may hinder an individual's or group's participation in school life. It is designed to comply with various acts of the Oireachtas such as Education Act (1998) the Equal Status Act (2000) and the Employment Equality Act (1998). It seeks to promote the principles of justice and equality for all members of the school community. All staff of the school are made aware of their responsibilities in this respect.

Following the enactment of the Equal Status Act (2000) the nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited are:

- **Gender**
- **Marital status**
- **Family status**
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Religion**
- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Race**
- **Member of the traveling community**

The Equal Status Act prohibits three forms of discrimination:

- **Direct Discrimination**
- **Indirect Discrimination**
- **Discrimination by Association**

School Ethos:

St.Christopher's Primary 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.

The **enrolment** criteria of St.Christopher's Primary School does not differentiate between pupils from different backgrounds. There is an equal right of access under the school's Enrolment Policy (See Enrolment Policy), in accordance with the terms of the Equal Status Act.

It is school policy to provide a balanced range of **resources in curricular areas** - textbooks, ancillary materials, software, sports equipment etc. Every opportunity will be taken to promote equality through the discreet and hidden curriculum. Nothing may appear in visual displays which would indicate a preference for any particular sector of society. Special efforts are made to avoid stereotyping when designating tasks and presenting classroom materials. **Cultural diversity** is a key characteristic of the pupils of St.Christopher's and respect for such diversity is important in choosing teaching materials.

Teachers shall ensure that the **language** used in the school to mediate the curriculum is balanced and shall avail of opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of unconsciously held attitudes.

Teachers promote the concept of equality and justice for all, both within specific educational programmes and in the "hidden" curriculum throughout the school day

The school endeavours to enable all **children to access all curriculum areas**, engaging them in appropriate intellectually stimulating work. All children are given opportunities to engage in integration, and appreciate other cultures and languages. Arrangements are made for **support teaching** in English, Maths and English as an Additional Language; such arrangements may differ from year to year, dependant on the allocation of staffing from the DES.

As agreed with the B.O.M. and parents all pupils in St.Christopher's shall wear a **uniform**, which has a range of options (trousers, skirts, skorts, shorts, pinafores). Assistance is given to needy children for the purchase of uniform.

This school is an **Equal Opportunities Employer**. Ref: Equal Status Act (2000) and Employment Equality Act (1998). Care is taken to avoid any action which could be interpreted as discrimination on any grounds; this is especially relevant in both the selection of candidates for interview and in the questions asked at interview.

Correct procedures for promotion will be strictly adhered to as per the CPSMA handbook. Fair and equitable measures in relation to Post of Responsibility, Maternity Leave, career breaks, etc. will be implemented, as per most recent, relevant DES circulars.

Roles and Responsibilities

The B.O.M. supports this policy and strives to maintain the ethos of equality and participation for all members of the school community.

A note on Intercultural Education:

Children are living and growing up in a diverse society. In order to educate them to live in such a society, we want to encourage children to regard all people as being of equal value and worth.

In St.Christopher's our school community is multicultural; acceptance of differences and similarities is an integral part of how we work and grow together. Our particular objectives include:

To value other cultures and religions.

- To recognise similarities and differences in our culturally diverse society and celebrate them in a positive way.
- To build the children's knowledge of other religions and cultures.
- To provide opportunities for the children to discuss and explore, in a non-threatening, purposeful way, values, attitudes and prejudices.
- To develop and encourage positive attitudes, tolerance and develop a deeper understanding of others, finding expression in all aspects of school life.

- To develop a European and global awareness of cultural diversity; to promote the learning of a European language.
- To ensure that our displays reflect a range of cultures.
- Where English is the additional language of the child, to support and value the child's first language.
- To choose resources which promote awareness and positive images of cultural diversity.
- To provide opportunities for the children to meet people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds at first hand by welcoming such visitors into school.
- To support teachers' professional development through attendance at relevant courses on intercultural education.
- Intercultural aspects permeate the whole curriculum, but are especially relevant in RE, English, Geography and Music.