



## ***Intercultural Policy***

### ***Introduction***

***One of the primary aims of education is the preparation of young people for the challenges of living in the world today. Therefore in Ashbourne Community School we believe Intercultural education is an essential part of that process. We also feel that embracing other cultures should not dilute the great pride we have in our own Irish heritage.***

### **What is Intercultural education?**

- It is education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life.
- It is education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges and promotes the values upon which equality is built.

From a policy perspective, Interculturalism rather than Multiculturalism has been adopted as an underlying principal.

“The term Multiculturalism is sometimes used to describe a society in which different cultures live side by side without much interaction... 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 Post-Primary School – Guidelines for Schools page i)*

### **What are the characteristics of Intercultural Education?**

- Intercultural education is for all students, as our students live in a world that is becoming increasingly diverse. We have a responsibility to prepare all our students for that world. It equips students to participate in an increasingly diverse Ireland, Europe and global society. Recognising that diversity is normal in humans is something that is appropriate at all ages.
- Intercultural education aims to raise student’s awareness of their own culture. All students have a culture and ethnicity. Learning to value their own culture and ethnicity is central to their self-esteem and sense of identity. It should help students speak for themselves and articulate their cultures and histories.
- Intercultural education is concerned with ethnicity and culture and not simply skin colour. It is equally concerned with discrimination against white minority ethnic groups such as people from Eastern Europe or members of the Travelling community.
- Intercultural education helps develop sensitivity in students and helps prevent racism.
- Intercultural education takes time. Building intercultural sensitivity and challenging prejudicial beliefs, attitudes and actions is a lifelong process.

*(Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School – Guidelines for Schools, pg.14 to 19)*

## **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.

Reflecting Irish society, approximately 9% of the school population are classed as "Newcomer" students by the Department of Education and Skills. A "Newcomer" student is one in which both parents originally come from outside Ireland. These students may also be referred to as EAL (English as an additional language) students.

In Ashbourne Community School our Newcomer students wish to be termed "International Students".

Our school community also includes students from the Travelling community.

Ashbourne Community School's Intercultural policy is informed by the following pieces of legislation.

- Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Education Act, 1998.
- The Equal Status Acts 2000/2004.

Details of these are found in Appendix 1.

## **Relationship to our Mission Statement**

### **Mission Statement**

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- Our school a place where we foster such values as respect, inclusion and care as evident in our school policy and practice.
- Ashbourne Community School is a partnership of students, staff, parents and guardians, Board of Management and our local and global communities. We value the on-going input of all these partners in the life of the school.
- We pursue academic excellence while recognising the diversity of our student body. Through a relevant curriculum, designed to meet the needs of all, we endeavour to help all students realise their potential.
- Through positive staff and student relationships and a broad extra-curricular programme, we aim to develop in each student a confident, healthy self-image and a sense of personal, local and global responsibility.
- We recognise that each student's personal and spiritual growth is important. We endeavour to co-operate with parents and guardians and religious leaders of all faiths to encourage the development of religious and spiritual values in each student.

## **Consultation**

A whole school approach was followed in the development of this policy. (See Appendix 1)

### **Aims:**

By adopting an Intercultural Approach to Education we hope to

- Enable students to respect and recognise the normality of diversity.
- Promote a sense of equality and justice.
- Challenge unfair discrimination and racism.
- Contribute to students' awareness of their own culture.
- Recognise the symbolic role of the presence of mother tongue/ first language in the school.
- Provide opportunities for learning regardless of mother tongue/ first language.
- Promote critical thinking on equality and cultural issues.
- Ensure that all students irrespective of their colour, ethnic group or religion feel part of the school community.
- Assist all students reach their potential and achieve high educational standards.
- Develop home and school links.

## **Policy Content**

### **Enrolment Procedures**

All Parents/ Guardians are requested to complete an Application Form and submit a birth certificate and two passport size photos.

A copy of the Code of Behaviour is given to all applicants and must be signed by both the incoming student and by a Parent/Guardian.

The Code of Behaviour will be translated into some of the languages of our International students. (See Enrolment Policy)

### **Uniform**

It is understood that students choosing to enrol in the school accept that the full school uniform must be worn during the school day and to and from school. Parents are asked to show support by cooperating fully with the school in ensuring that students wear full uniform. (See Uniform Policy)

In this context students of particular religious backgrounds who may wish to wear a different aspect of uniform are requested to seek written permission from the Board of Management.

However, the wearing of clothing in the classroom which obscures a facial view and creates an artificial barrier between pupil and teacher is not recommended. Such clothing hinders proper communication. (See current Department of Education and Skills policy on clothing in schools).

### **Religion**

Ashbourne Community School is a designated Community School, which is multi-denominational as per Deed of Trust of Community Schools. We recognise the dignity of each individual.

Under current guidelines from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath, the religious curriculum to Junior Certificate level follows the aims and objectives of the Junior Certificate religion syllabus as outlined by the Department of Education. (See Religion Policy)

Important world festivals are acknowledged within the school and opportunities are provided for students to critically reflect on other faith communities and religions.

Parents/Guardians who wish to have their children withdrawn from religious education classes must follow the procedures as outlined by the Religion Policy. They should request such withdrawal in writing to the Board of Management.  
(See Religion Policy)

### **Induction**

Induction is held for all incoming first year students to help them adapt to their new school setting. During this induction, school policies and the Code of Behaviour are explained. This time is an opportunity to inform students of the English Language Support programme and the Pastoral Care programme available in the school. Students for whom English is not their first language and who may have difficulty understanding this information will have access to translations in the following languages: Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Romanian and Mandarin.

All Parents/Guardians of incoming First year students are invited to an information session in the school on the first day of term. For Parent/Guardians of International students they are also invited to an additional information giving session which is geared towards their needs and it provides an opportunity to ask questions and meet staff in a smaller group setting.

For students joining mid-year, this translated information is given to them where applicable and they are included in the student register (See below).

Students joining mid-year are linked with the class representative from their base class to help adjust to the new school setting. The International student is introduced to staff members who play an important role in their time in the school. Where possible they are introduced to speakers of their first language.

### **Student register**

Important information regarding International students is gathered about the student once the student enters the school in our effort to meet their needs. This includes how the name of the student is correctly pronounced, their nationality, the length of time the student has been in Ireland, their proficiency level in English, their religion if any and English proficiency level of Parent or Guardian.

This register is distributed to Staff as early as possible in the school year and Staff are asked to make themselves aware of basic information included in the register and update their teacher file as necessary.

### **English Language Support**

Adequate language support is vital to ensuring that all students can fully engage with the curriculum and in school life.

The Department of Education and Skills provides additional educational resources for pupils who are learning English as an additional language in post-primary schools. In general students are allowed English language support for a two year period. This may have already taken place in the primary school the student previously attended.

Full details of the resources available for EAL support are set out in DES circular 0015/2009 All Newcomer students will be assessed for language proficiency by the English Language Support Co-ordinator.

The NCCA Post-Primary Assessment Kits

[http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Inclusion/English\\_as\\_an\\_Additional\\_Language/IILT\\_Materials/Post-primary/](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/English_as_an_Additional_Language/IILT_Materials/Post-primary/) are used to assess non-English-speaking pupils.

The information collected on English language proficiency of our students will be distributed to all staff for inclusion in their registers early in the school term.

Students who receive English language support classes are generally withdrawn during Irish class time, providing they have an Irish exemption (See below).

In exceptional cases, for example where students have very low proficiency levels, the student may be withdrawn from other classes.

It is important to note that International research (Cummins, 1981) indicates that Newcomer students can take between five and seven years to acquire full language proficiency.

### **Irish exemptions**

The Department of Education and Skills allows students in Ireland to apply to be excused from studying Irish in post-primary school. The circumstances in which a student will be given this exemption are very limited.

- In general students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland will be excused from studying Irish
- Students who have no understanding of English, when enrolled, would only be required to study one language, either English or Irish.

Information about post-primary Irish exemption is found in Circular M10/94 from The Department of Education and Skills. Additional information is found in Appendix 3.

### **Attendance:**

Issues discussed in the Education Welfare Act, 2000, are brought to the attention of all Parents in the school through the Code of Behaviour. Procedures for dealing with absenteeism in the school are standard for all Students.

(See Attendance policy)

### **Planning**

Through curriculum planning and development we will highlight Intercultural issues. An Intercultural section should be provided in all Subject plans and all Staff should familiarise themselves with the content of this policy.

### **Resources**

- All Staff are encouraged to follow the Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School Guidelines, copies of which were distributed to Staff and a copy is to be found in the School Development planning Section in the Staffroom.
- A Special Duties Post (Intercultural Co-ordinator) has been created (See below)
- A teacher with additional responsibility for English Language Support has been provided.

### **Communication**

- Use of foreign languages on notices and/ or over the intercom throughout the school year.
- Translation of Reports/ documents when possible.
- This policy document will be available for view on our school website
- Students are encouraged to continue to use their first language and take their native language exam in Leaving Certificate when possible.

### **Intercultural events**

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

Opportunity for assistance in this occurs by organising events such as:

- Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish week)
- Intercultural week
- Coffee Morning for International parents and members of the Parent-Teacher Association.
- Inter faith services.

### **Staff development**

An Intercultural workshop was presentation to staff August 29<sup>th</sup> 2007. Staff should continue to seek training in this area when provided.

### **Roles**

A whole school approach is very important to ensure the aims of the policy are fulfilled.

### **Board of Management**

The Board of Management has responsibility to ensure the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time and to consider reports from the Principal and staff on the implementation of the policy.

### **Principal/Deputy Principals**

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.

It is the responsibility of the Principal/Deputy Principals to support Continued Professional Development and Inservice training available in this area.

### **Year Head**

The Year Head has overall responsibility for all the Students in the year group.  
(See Code of Behaviour)

### **Tutor**

The class Tutor has a particular responsibility for his or her assigned class group and their main role is a caring one.

The Tutor has a responsibility to provide opportunities for inclusion of all students in the class group and encourage participation by all.

In the same manner they deal with all students in their class group, the Tutor should highlight issues or concerns they might have in relation to Newcomer Students or Traveller Students to the appropriate personnel.

### **Class Teacher**

Teachers play a key role in implementing intercultural education and helping students develop open and respectful attitudes and behaviour:

A key element of the success of this policy will be a continuation of the high level of co-operation shown by the teaching staff to date.

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) students remain the responsibility of the subject specialist teacher at post-primary level. The teacher will work closely with the EAL support teacher. (Department of Education and skills Circular 0015/2009)

### **English Language Co-ordinator and EAL Support Teachers**

The English Language support Co-ordinator is responsible for record keeping of meetings, student referrals and documentation dealing with assessment.

In collaboration with parents and mainstream class teacher, EAL support teachers identify pupils requiring additional language support, assess pupils' proficiency in English using the assessment material, devise appropriate language programmes and record and monitor pupils' progress. (Department of Education Circular 0015/2009)

### **Guidance Counsellors**

The Guidance and Counselling service aims to provide a range of measures to help all students make personal, social, educational and career choices in their lives. In providing the Guidance programme, the Guidance Personnel ensure that each International student has access to a range of activities to help their integration into the school environment and help to provide information about subject choice and information on future careers. (See Guidance Policy)

### **Chaplain**

The chaplain is the faith presence in the school community and is available to all students and staff.

(See Religion Policy)

### **Students (Irish and International)**

Students should avail of the opportunities to educate themselves about cultural diversity. They should respect themselves and others and seek to build an inclusive school community. Students should also report incidents of racism which they may experience or witness.. Newcomer students should aim to become involved in school life.

### **Student Council**

The student council should liaise with staff for example The Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads and Intercultural Co-ordinator on Intercultural issues of concern to students.

They should help to provide an Intercultural balance on the council when possible and help ensure International student's views can be heard.

The student council should be involved in mentoring of International students.

### **Parents and PTA**

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

Parents of International students are encouraged to attend Parent-Teacher meetings or meet with Staff or Management if required regardless of English language ability. They are encouraged to have someone translate for them and where possible the school may assist in providing translation.

The Parent-Teacher association has been very helpful in attending events aimed at encouraging participation in school life amongst Newcomer parents and guardians.

### **Intercultural Co-ordinator**

Evidence of celebrating diversity should be evident in the physical environment of the school and to that end the Intercultural Co-ordinator has responsibility for helping promote this. For example

- Translated material, greetings and signage where possible
- Various Intercultural events planned throughout the year. Some examples can include an Intercultural week where all staff have the opportunity to highlight intercultural aspects within their subject area. It can include “Show racism the red card” workshops or speakers invited to speak to groups etc.\
- The Intercultural Co-ordinator will have contact with International students to provide an opportunity to highlight issues.
- The intercultural Co-ordinator will help develop positive interaction with the Parents/guardians of the International students.
- Upkeep of an Intercultural notice board in the staffroom as a means of distributing information

### **Recording and reporting racist incidents**

Any incident deemed to be of a racist nature by a member of staff or the victim themselves shall be considered a breach of the Code of Behaviour.

Racism is the belief that some people are inferior because they belong to a certain ethnic, racial or cultural group. This belief leads to attitudes of prejudice and discriminatory actions.

An incident where verbal or physical aggression targets a person on the basis of colour, religion, ethnicity including membership of the Travelling Community and where the incident is felt by the victim to be racist it may be defined as a racist incident.

(See Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy)

### **Success Criteria**

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

- The school community promotes an inclusive culture.
- Increased participation by International students in extra-curricular activities.
- Overall improvement in student interaction with both their teachers and peers.
- The curriculum is made as accessible as possible to all students.
- Racist incidents or remarks are not tolerated by Students or Staff in Ashbourne Community School.
- Students value similarities and difference.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Consultation process**

A body of Staff formed an Intercultural Committee to begin the process of the policy development. Questionnaires sent to students and Parents/Guardians were reviewed and formed a basis of information for the Committee. Members of the Teaching Staff, non-teaching Staff, the Student Council, Parent representatives and Students and Parents of ethnic minorities were consulted.

## Appendix 2

**Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989** states "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her culture, to profess and practice his or her religion, or to use his or her own language"

Within the context of the Department of Education and Skills regulations and programmes, the rights of the Trustees/ Board of Management as set out in section 15 of the **Education Act 1998**. This obliges Boards of Management to "have regard to the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society".

**The Equal Status Acts 2000/2004** requires that schools do not discriminate across the following nine grounds. Gender, Marital Status, Family Status, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Age, Disability, Race, Member of the Travelling Community.

### Appendix 3

#### Irish Exemptions

Where entry to a third-level course requires a student to have a certain mark in Irish at the Leaving Certificate examination, students who have been exempted from the study of Irish may also be exempted from this requirement. This is a matter for each individual college. Generally, if a student has had an exemption during post-primary education, he/she is likely to be exempted from Irish as a college entry requirement. The student applying for a third-level course through the Central Applications Office (CAO) should send a copy of the exemption certificate with his/her CAO application form.

#### Further information

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has published Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School ([www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie))

The website of the English Language Support Programme([www.elsp.ie](http://www.elsp.ie)) has activities related to the Junior and Leaving Certificate curriculum. Also available is the Revised English Language Proficiency Benchmarks for Newcomer Post-Primary Student.

The NEWB leaflet for parents "*Don't let your child miss out*" is available in 18 languages

Guidelines on Traveller Education in Post-Primary Schools are available on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

"AIM- Accessing Intercultural materials" is a web based information service which contains links to a variety of resources relevant to migrants and education. It is designed for use by pupils, parents and teachers and is available on the Department of Education and skills' website. [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

#### Language Proficiency benchmark levels are

- Level 0: Absence of any English-language proficiency
- Level A1: Can understand and use basic words and phrases in a social and school context.
- Level A2: Can understand, read and write simple English and can speak English sufficiently well to exchange information
- Level B1: Can function well enough in English to be integrated into the mainstream classroom

One of the largest minority ethnic groups in Ireland is the Traveller community. The Irish Governments 1995 *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* identifies Travellers as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland, but also notes that this has often not been fully recognised. "*It is clear that the Traveller community's culture is distinct and different. 'Settled' people generally recognise the difference but fail to understand it as cultural difference.*"

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School at its meeting on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 (Ref. Meeting Nr. 187 ).

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Chairperson  
Board of Management  
Ashbourne Community School*