

# **Equality and Inclusion in Catholic Schools**



**Information and Advice for Parents and Carers**

## **Equality and Inclusion Education**

**Catholic schools welcome all their students as members of their school community. This is evident in the way that all are valued, treated with respect and encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school.**

**While Catholic schools must be aware of their duty to promote the distinctive beliefs, values and practices of the Catholic community, they are expected to bear witness to this attitude of respect for, and appreciation of, all people.**

**Schools must also operate within the terms of current legislation to ensure an atmosphere where all members of the community can feel safe in learning what it means to live and learn with others, including those who may not share their faith.**

**Key to this is how the school community educates all of its members in terms of the Equality Act (2010), and in terms of authentic Catholic Social Teaching. Schools must offer a programme in which learning is age and stage appropriate, and which equips young people with the skills, knowledge and experience to live their faith in the school and the wider world. This programme should be able to sit alongside other learning from Core RE, and from Relationships and Moral Education programmes.**

## **A Developmental Approach**

**We believe that our schools work best when they work in partnership with parents, who are the first teachers of their children.**

**The whole ethos of the Catholic school, with Christ at its centre, is based around the idea that each and every person is a result of the work of God. This means that we should meet all people with love, respect and dignity, and that we should be able to expect to be treated the same way. However, we are not all the same, and we do not always agree. Equality and Inclusion education in the Catholic school sets out to help young people look at how we deal with issues of equality and inclusion – or the lack of them – in our relationships, in a way that is appropriate and relevant to their age and stage, and at a level that sits well with all their other learning. Young people are encouraged to see equality and inclusion not just as something they learn about, but as something that informs their learning, their relationships and their faith.**

## What Do the Lessons Contain?

The lessons developed for use in Catholic schools cover certain key areas relating to relationships, our own sense of belonging in our community, and the law. The main themes at each level include:

### EARLY

- Relationships
- Being kind
- My family and friends
- People who care for me

### FIRST

- How do we show we are friends?
- How do we hurt people?
- What can we do if we see or hear someone being hurt or upset?
- Promoting positive behaviours :

Class rules / Class agreement

- Rights of each person

### SECOND

- Peer Mediation/ Reconciliation/ Restorative practice
- Ways we are different
- How are we unique?
- Barriers that some people have to overcome
- How do we judge others?
- How can we be responsible? Respecting rights

### THIRD

- Put aside differences and starting anew
- Rights of the Child
- Justice, Respect and Equality
- Challenging Prejudice – discriminatory language and bullying

### FOURTH

- What is the Equalities Act & why should I know about it?
- Hate Crimes

### SENIOR PHASE

- Growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Values v Tolerance (“I don’t need to agree with you to like, respect or value you”)
- Catholic Social Teaching – preference for the poor, protection of the vulnerable
- Protected Characteristics: why are they protected; what is the history; how can we remove prejudice?

**All young people learn at their own rate and pace, but as a general guide:**

**EARLY LEVEL: to the end of P1, but later for some**

**FIRST LEVEL: to the end of P4, but earlier or later for some**

**SECOND LEVEL: to the end of P7, but earlier or later for some**

**THIRD/FOURTH LEVEL: to the end of S3, but earlier or later for some**

**SENIOR PHASE: to the end of S6, but earlier for some**

## What Can Parents Do?

Remind your child frequently that God loves them for themselves; after all, He made them to be who they are. In turn then, this is true of all people. We should treat all people with the respect and dignity we hope to be treated with ourselves.

From early years be aware and sensitive to the use of language. Give them the tools they will need to avoid unhelpful language themselves, and to challenge it when they hear it used by others. Let them see this through your own example.

They will be learning about The Golden Rule: treat others as you would like to be treated. Remind them that this does not apply only to people we like and/or agree with. We should try to be kind to others, even if we think they are being unkind to us. We can disagree with someone without being cruel or unkind.

Ask your child how their day was: how things are going; if they are happy or unhappy. This conversation can open up a space where they can tell you about things that are worrying them, including bullying or uneasiness. This may involve them or someone close to them.

Encourage discussion around the ideas of equality and inclusion. Young people will see and hear so many conflicting messages in the media; discussion can help them to sift through this information and express their own views and opinions.

For all young people, social media is an increasingly significant part of their lives. Be aware of their online life; make it part of the conversation so that they will not feel it unusual to bring up anything they have come across which upsets them or makes them feel uneasy.

Be familiar with the school's policy on equality and inclusion, so that you can give your young person the best advice about who to talk to if they have concerns, and so that you can have the best possible channels of communication with the school.

If you have any worries or concerns, contact the school sooner rather than later.

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