



ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

Inclusion and Diversity Policy

Revised June 2024

"We will work in collaboration with other educational institutions and in partnership with parents and students to maximize academic and creative potential of students, enabling them to achieve the highest educational standards, thereby enriching their lives, the community and the economy".

St Mary's Mission Statement

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and others cultures, and the environment.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Article 29**

Rationale:

As a Catholic and Rights Respecting School (Gold), all members of our school community are valued and have equal opportunities to the curricular, extra-curricular and pastoral provisions enabling them to be fully engaged and supported in their learning, able to achieve their full potential. Through our whole school ethos, values and mission statement all Students are treated with respect and dignity and have equal access to all the opportunities that the school offers. The teaching strategies equip our students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to enable them to make informed choices allowing them to contribute positively to their community, to society as a whole and the economy. We believe that learning should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone within an inclusive environment where diversity is nurtured and celebrated.

Inclusion is achieved by:

- Designing a curriculum to promote a full range of learning, thinking and life skills;
- Providing a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets the needs and career aspirations of students;
- Using flexible and responsive teaching and learning strategies with additional student support when required;
- Equipping students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to succeed as individuals and as responsible and valued members of society;
- Having a pastoral ethos that promotes inclusion and celebrates diversity;
- Developing a close partnership with the whole community, particularly parents/carers to address the individual needs of every student.

Aims:

Through the establishment of a caring framework as a Rights Respecting School we aim to:

- Encourage all students to exercise self-discipline, self-respect, respect for others, the environment and local community and develop a sense of personal responsibility in line with Article 29 of UNCRC *'Education must encourage the child's respect for human rights as well as respect for others'*.

- Provide a systematic, consistent and appropriate response to behaviour management in school;
- Ensure students recognise the need to have rules in school and to fulfil their responsibility as outlined in the School Charter;
- Foster mutual respect, understanding, sensitivity, open mindedness and generosity towards others so as to enrich both personal and community life;
- Support the health, safety and wellbeing of students;
- Foster a learning culture that celebrates and reward positive behaviour, achievement and success;
- Create a stimulating learning environment which encourages and rewards personal endeavor and achievement;
- Support the personal development of all students by recognising and rewarding high standards of behaviour and effort.

Principles:

As a Rights Respecting, all ability school, we provide an education system that offers equality of opportunity to all groups of students within the school.

These groups include students:

- From Ethnic backgrounds including Irish Travellers;
- Who have English as an additional language (Newcomer Students);
- Relocated to Northern Ireland through the resettlement programme;
- Who have Special Educational Needs;
- With Physical Disabilities, Medical Issues and/or Emotional Needs;
- Who are Gifted and Talented;
- Children known to Social Services
- School age mothers (SAM);
- Children looked after (CLA);
- At risk of disaffection or exclusion, young carers, sick children, children from families under stress;
- Experience difficulties with sexual orientation and gender identity;

We aim to provide differentiated learning and support in an all ability setting and a curriculum that meets the needs of all students, individuals and groups by:

- Setting high expectations;
- Establishing individual targets for all subjects which attainment is matched against;
- Creating suitable learning challenges for all students;
- Responding to students' diverse learning needs;
- Support students to overcome potential barriers to learning;
- Liaising with relevant agencies to support students.

We aim to provide a happy, healthy and safe school by:

- Recognising, reflecting and celebrating the skills, talents, contributions and diversity of all our students;
- Providing high quality pastoral care, support and guidance;
- Safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of students;

- Listening and responding to the concerns of students and parents/carers.

We provide inclusive education for our students by reviewing and evaluating our school provisions to ensure that each student achieves to the best of their ability, ensuring early identification of underachievement and use of appropriate support strategies. We work in partnership with students, parents/carers and external agencies.

All school policies support inclusion and are reflected in the school development planning. These include Pastoral Care, Personal Development, Learning Support, RSE, Ethos Statement, CRED, Anti-Bullying, e-Safety and Acceptable Internet Use, Attendance, Learning and Teaching, Behaviour, Period Dignity and Health Education.

Principles into Practice:

As a Rights Respecting School, we promote inclusion through the school ethos which permeates all aspects of school life and through the curriculum and pastoral system.

The following strategies and support are available and are used where appropriate:

- Pastoral Care System, Rights Respecting School Council, Mentoring Programmes, delivery of Religious Education, Personal Development, LLW, Citizenship and Drama;
- ‘Bee Positive, Bee Strong, Bee Kind’ ethos
- Vibrant range of Student Voice groups;
- After school study and Booster Classes;
- Health and Wellbeing policy and practice;
- CRED, RSE, Anti-Bullying, Period Dignity and Behaviour Policies;
- Learning Support Policy and arrangements;
- Use of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and Access Arrangements
- CEFRs to track Newcomer Student progress;
- Systematic follow-up to serious incidents – Pastoral Structures and Behaviour Policy;
- Effective ‘Every Day Counts’ Attendance Policy’
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service for persistent non-attendance and other concerns;
- Mixed Ability Learning and Teaching Groups;
- Curriculum pathways at KS4 and Post 16;
- Mentoring Programme in KS4;
- Learning partners programme in KS3;
- School counselling service (one Counsellor – 1 day per week);
- Working with external support services including: Social Services, Start 360, PIPS, EWO, EA, Behaviour Support Team, EA Youth Service, Educational Psychologist, CLA Team, CAMHS etc
- Professional Development and Training programmes for staff;
- Wide ranging programme of extra-curricular activities accessible to all Students;
- Key stage transition programmes and arrangements;
- Induction for all Students who join the school community during the academic year;
- Taster days, induction and transition support programmes in place at key times;
- Participation in and links with other schools in the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community
- Curriculum links with industry and Students in Industry Days

A student can be referred for pastoral or curriculum support by any member of staff or by parents/carers through their child's Form Teacher, Year Tutor or a member of SLT.

Equality of Provision

The Curriculum and Pastoral system in St. Mary's is relevant and accessible to all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, language, perceived or actual gender, perceived or actual sexual orientation, disability and religion. The school ensures students with additional educational needs and newcomer students have appropriate, accessible and relevant education within a differentiated learning environment.

Confidentiality

Student concerns or personal issues are treated in a secure, trusting, respectful environment where students feel reassured that their well-being is being promoted and cared for. The right to privacy is respected at all times, no one should be expected to ask or answer personal questions. Students are encouraged to discuss any concerns with their parents or carers.

In relation to child protection and safeguarding, teachers cannot promise confidentiality. Both parents and students should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained. The school also provides information on sources of support outside the school and how they can be accessed. Teachers play a significant role in identifying potentially 'at risk' Students and are alert to Students who are experiencing distress and/or changes in their behaviour.

The Principal or Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a Student is at risk or that abuse is suspected. Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the Departments booklet '**Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools**' (2023) and the school's Child Protection Policy.

Teachers can provide general educational advice to students as part of the curriculum. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of parents/carers and reflects the ethos of the school. Teachers recognise it is the role of Health Professionals to offer medical advice to students.

Approaches to Learning and Teaching

Good relationships are essential when ensuring students feel secure, safe and included in school. Learning takes place in a safe, secure, respectful and inclusive environment where students are encouraged to express their feelings and opinions and participate confidently and freely without embarrassment or judgement. The adherence to the Rights Respecting School Charter (RESPECT) helps Students to feel more at ease exploring and discuss sensitive issues.

Preventative Curriculum - 'Keeping Safe Messages'

The Personal Development Programme together with the wider RSE curriculum offers a safe and supportive environment for students to explore sensitive issues in an age-appropriate way to help them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. This is achieved by raising awareness of social, emotional and health issues, developing students' confidence, resilience and coping skills. The school also offers early intervention support when students are experiencing difficulties.

Responding to Sensitive Issues

On occasions, certain sensitive issues may be explored by teachers. Such issues need to be presented in a non-judgemental way, free from prejudice and bias. The messages received by the students should be compatible with the morals and values framework of the school.

Teachers are particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural backgrounds of their students when dealing with sensitive issues eg same-sex parents/carers. Students' views and values are influenced by their informal learning experiences and by the views of family peers, community and the media.

Through the delivery of RSE, there may be sensitive issues which different individuals hold strong opinions on, based on their values and beliefs. Students have opportunities to explore such issues in an age-appropriate way, enabling them to deal with the diverse and complex range of challenges facing them in society today. In dealing with such issues Form Teachers will follow the Personal Development curriculum to help students develop an understanding of their feelings, thinking and behaviour and to develop strategies to manage these feelings together with respecting those of others. It may be more appropriate to deal with certain issues or questions on an individual basis or to arrange time for group discussions outside class time. Through staff development, teachers are supported to deal with sensitive issues.

External Examinations

The Equality Act 2010 extends the application of the Equality Act to general qualifications. The school ensures that the access arrangements and special consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law maintaining equality of opportunity for all students. The Learning Support Co-ordinator leads the Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment process including application for access arrangements, collection of supporting documentation to support the request for access arrangements, allocation of readers, examination rooms and any extra provisions to ensure all candidates have equal access to public examinations.

School Age Mums (SAMS)

In the event of a student informing a teacher that they are or may be pregnant the teacher must refer the student to the Designated Teacher who will follow Child Protection guidelines. Any school age mother will be referred to and supported by SAM (School Age Mums) and an education plan of support will be agreed between the school, agency and home. Students will be encouraged to continue to attend school, before and after the birth of their baby.

Abuse

Any member of staff is able to play a significant role in the early detection of abuse. Correct procedures as outlined in DENI's Circular (Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools – 2017/04) should be followed as outlined in the Child Protection Policy:

- The member of staff should immediately inform the Designated Teacher
- The Designated Teacher must inform / consult with Social Services and / or the PSNI
- No member of staff should take on the role of investigator. This is the responsibility of Social Services and the PSNI
- Staff should give the student time to talk without probing, record exactly what the student says and not promise to keep secrets.

Confidentiality cannot be promised to any student when abuse is suspected. The students will also be reassured that she will be supported.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

We are aware that as young people are growing up they can experience sexual identity, gender identity and sexual orientation issues. In keeping with Catholic teaching, it is important that abstinence is promoted for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. All Students have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Relationships and Sexuality Education will help to promote positive views regarding sexual orientation and gender identity which in turn will help to raise the self-esteem of young people who may feel different. The school will handle all issues of sexual orientation and gender identity in a sensitive and reassuring way. As a Rights Respecting School, all negative and prejudice attitudes and behaviours will be challenged to create an inclusive learning environment.

Bullying type behaviour on the grounds of sexual orientation, is as unacceptable as it is on any other situation where someone is mistreated. All issues relating to homophobic language and bullying type behaviour will be dealt with appropriately in accordance with the School's Anti-Bullying Policy. Use of unkind language will be challenged and deemed as unacceptable.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

FGM is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. If any member of staff has a concern that some Student young may be at immediate risk of FGM they should report this immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and an immediate referral will be made to the HSCT Gateway Team.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. If a member of staff has knowledge or is suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a student, they must report this immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and an immediate referral will be made to the HSCT Gateway Team.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Governors

- Ensures that the school complies with Race Relations, Disability and Learning Support related legislation;
- Ensures that the relevant Pastoral Policies and related procedures and strategies are implemented

The Principal

- Ensures that the policy and its related procedures and strategies are implemented;
- Ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the policy and are given appropriate training and support;
- Takes appropriate action and if necessary, disciplinary action against staff or students who discriminate or contravene the policy;
- Ensures that issues of respect for diversity, equality and inclusion are addressed within the learning areas of Religious Education, CRED, Personal Development and Citizenship

Vice Principal

- Liaises with Year Tutors, Form Teachers, Behaviour Management Coordinator and Learning Support Coordinators to provide support for students with emotional or behavioural difficulties that are creating a barrier to learning;
- Liaises with Year Tutors, Form Teachers, Behaviour Management Coordinator, Learning Support Co-ordinator and Newcomer Coordinator and parents/carers to refer and support Students who are at risk of disaffection or suspension to external agencies where appropriate;
- Ensures that the School Development Plan identifies areas for development to maintain a welcoming, diverse and inclusive learning environment.
- Ensures that the Student Voice is represented by a diverse group of students that provides a forum for Student opinions and concerns.

Learning Support Co-ordinator/s

- Ensures that students with Special Educational Needs are identified and that their needs are met including the provision of access arrangements;
- Coordinates the work of Classroom Assistants in the support of Students with SEN in the classroom;
- Liaise with staff to ensure every subject teacher contributes to IEPs to monitor and assess the progress of Students with SEN;
- Works with a range of external agencies to provide effective and appropriate support to individuals and groups of students and advice on career opportunities;
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of students with SEN, reporting to parents/carers and other stakeholders at set times throughout the year;
- In consultation with the Vice Principal, Year Tutors, Form Teachers, Behaviour Management Coordinator, Learning Support Co-ordinator and Newcomer Coordinator, co-ordinates the support given to students by outside agencies

Newcomer Coordinator

- Liaises with all staff to share information and support Newcomer Students;
- Ensure statutory requirements are met to support Newcomer Students;
- Lead whole staff training in relation to assessment arrangements for Newcomer Students;
- Liaise with staff to ensure every subject teacher contributes to the CEFR process to monitor and assess the progress of Newcomer Students;
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of Newcomer Students, reporting to parents and other stakeholders at set times throughout the year;
- Works with a range of external agencies to provide effective and appropriate support to individuals and groups of Students;
- In consultation with the Vice Principal, Year Tutors, Form Teachers, Behaviour Management Coordinator and Learning Support Co-ordinator co-ordinates the support given to students by outside agencies

Year Tutors

- Collate information from Form Teachers and subject teachers regarding Students with barriers to learning or inclusion issues;
- Liaise with the Learning Support Co-ordinator and Behaviour Management Coordinator to provide support for students with emotional/behavioural difficulties;
- Coordinate weekly Year Group Assemblies and meetings which discuss the needs, concerns and views of Students in the year group;
- Ensures that reported incidents of racism, racial harassment, bullying type behaviour and abuse are recorded and reported to the Designated Teacher for Safeguarding and that appropriate action is taken

Form Teachers

- Inform the Year Tutor, Behaviour Management Coordinator, Learning Support Co-ordinator or Vice Principal when they become aware of potential barriers to learning;
- As a Rights Respecting School, develop a sense of community and belonging within the form group, school and wider community;
- Liaise with Senior Prefects to carry out their roles and responsibilities with their Form Class;
- Encourage student participation in the Rights Respecting School Councils (Senior and Junior) and in the many Student Voice groups.
- Through the delivery of the Personal Development Programme allow students to explore in a positive way issues surrounding inclusivity, diversity, discrimination and challenge stereotypes and the use of discriminatory language

Subject Teachers

- Understand Students as learners and consider a variety of learning styles in the classroom and use differentiation to support students and meet their needs;
- Promote race equality, disability, equality and diversity through teaching and through relations with students, staff, parents/carers and the wider community;
- Are aware of potential barriers to learning and refer Students with difficulties to the Form Teacher who will liaise with the Year Tutor;
- Create a learning environment where students can contribute fully and feel valued;
- Take account of students' cultural background, disability and linguistic needs in classroom practice;
- Deal with incidents of discrimination and challenge stereotypes and the use of discriminatory language;
- Work with Classroom Assistants (where appropriate) to ensure that the diverse needs of students are met

Classroom Assistants

- Understand students as learners and consider a variety of learning styles in the classroom and use differentiation to support Students and meet their needs;
- Are aware of barriers to inclusion and communicate concerns to teaching staff;
- Report incidents of discrimination and the use of discriminatory language to a member of Pastoral Care Team

Students

- Inform a member of staff if they witness any incidents of discrimination;
- Inform their Form Teacher or Year Tutor if they become aware of any barriers to learning

Parents/Carers

- Inform their child's Form Teacher, Year Tutor, Vice Principal or Principal if they have knowledge of any discrimination;

- Inform the Form Teacher, Year Tutor, Vice Principal or Principal of any barriers to learning;
- Work in partnership with the school in promoting inclusion

Use of External/Support Agencies:

We acknowledge the importance of a range of external groups in promoting inclusivity within the school but also the importance of ensuring that such agencies adhere to the values and ethos of our school.

Current external/support agencies include:

- Inclusion Diversity Service (IDS)
- Traveller Liaison Coordinator
- Social Services
- Education Authority
- School Counsellor
- Educational Psychologist
- EA Youth Service
- School Age Mums (SAM)
- xL Princes Trust
- Women's Aid
- Work 4 U
- Start 360
- Religious Retreat Teams/Programmes
- PSNI
- STEPS Programme
- CARA Friend
- EWO Service
- Ready4Anything
- PIPS Care and Support
- Behaviour Support Team

Related School Policies:

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- ✚ Pastoral Care Policy
- ✚ Learning Support Policy
- ✚ CRED Policy
- ✚ Child Protection Policy
- ✚ Drugs Education Policy
- ✚ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ✚ Behaviour Policy
- ✚ Personal Development Policy
- ✚ RSE Policy
- ✚ Health Education Policy
- ✚ E-Safety and Acceptable Internet Use Policy
- ✚ Period Dignity

Dissemination of the Policy:

Pastoral Policies are available to all parents/carers on the school's website and app. An overview of Pastoral Policies is sent to all parents/carers at the start of each academic year.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:

Mr Fitzpatrick, Vice Principal is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____

Date: _____

Date of Review: __June 2027__

