



Knocknacarra Educate Together
National School

Equality of Access and Participation Policy

This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to highlight policies and procedures to ensure fairness and equity are afforded to all members of the school community.

Original Ratification: 2017 Reviewed: 2021, 2025

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Introduction and Rationale:

Knocknacarra Educate Together NS endeavours to support the holistic development of children in an atmosphere based on equality and respect for the individual. It is a child-centred school where the central question for decision-making is what is best for the child. As an Educate Together national school, its identity as an equality-based school is integral and influences all aspects of school life. This policy is devised to ensure equality of access for all pupils and their families as well as 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 the 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.

Aims and Objectives:

- To highlight procedures to ensure equal opportunity and access for all members of the school community.
- To identify agreed general guidelines related to ensuring equity and equal access that will inform other policies and procedures.

General Guidelines

As found in 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 and membership of the traveling community. The Equal Status Act prohibits three forms of discrimination: direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and discrimination by association. The school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy describe policies and procedures in place to ensure all members of the school community demonstrate respect to one another.

This policy is aspirational and is comprised of long-term goals. It is recognised that these goals require ongoing and consistent review of policies and practices towards the creation of an inclusive learning community.

All policies, particularly the Admissions Policy, and procedures must afford equal access and opportunity to all. This aligns with the school's ethos that is child-centred, equality-based, co-educational and democratically run.

This school is an Equal Opportunities Employer. Care is taken to avoid any action which could be interpreted as discrimination on any grounds, and this is especially relevant in both the selection of candidates for interview and in the questions asked at interview. Fair and equitable measures will be implemented in relation to promotion to posts of responsibility, the granting of leave, class allocation, etc., as described in Department of Education and Skills circulars.

Any member of the school community who believes these goals have not been fulfilled in policy, or practice should refer to the school's Communication Policy and initiate a complaints procedure.

Policies and Procedures:

Social Status

The enrolment criteria of Knocknacarra Educate Together NS will not differentiate between pupils from different social strata. There is an equal right of access under the school's Admissions Policy and the Educate Together ethos. No child will be denied participation in a learning activity due to inability to pay.

Family Structure

All families will be welcomed in the school community regardless of structure. Parents and guardians will be encouraged to participate in the life of the school. The different types of families will be discussed and celebrated in Learn Together and SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) lessons, and diverse families will be represented in the curriculum materials used in the school as often as possible.

Gender

It is this school's policy to provide a gender-balanced range of resources in curricular areas - textbooks, ancillary materials, software, sports equipment, sports competitions, etc. Every opportunity will be taken to promote gender equality through the discrete and hidden curriculum. Teachers shall ensure that the language used in the school to mediate the curriculum is gender balanced and shall avail of opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of unconsciously held attitudes. There shall be no differentiation according to gender in the allocation of classes, and all learning opportunities, including extracurricular activities, will be afforded to all equally. Individual children's, parent's and staff member's preferred terms regarding gender will be respected and used. A recruitment advertisement may not indicate a preference for one gender over another. Neither may any question be asked at interview which could be interpreted as discriminatory on gender grounds.

Cultural, Linguistic and Beliefs Diversity

A wide range of cultures, backgrounds and beliefs will be represented as much as possible in the resources used in the school including textbooks, ancillary materials, software, etc. Every opportunity will be taken to develop awareness of cultures, languages and belief systems in both the discrete and hidden curriculum. The Learn Together Curriculum is essential with this regard. Teachers shall ensure that the language used in the school to mediate the curriculum is sensitive, balanced and inclusive. Acknowledging that the languages of instruction of the school are English and Irish, children, parents and staff members are welcome to use other languages for personal communication, in an inclusive and respectful manner, as well as to mediate the learning process. The diversity of beliefs, language and cultures represented in the school will be celebrated.

Becoming an Anti-Bias Learning Community

Going beyond developing an acceptance and celebrating diversity, the school seeks to actively identify and address all forms of bias related to any of the nine discrimination grounds found in Irish equality legislation. Such a perspective is a continuous journey rather than a destination. Anti-racism and anti-bias perspectives require learning about the history and experiences of others, acknowledging and confronting our own biases and engaging in sometimes uncomfortable but transformative conversations with others. Being an anti-bias learning community requires more than just not being biased or racist in our words or actions but also actively challenging bias when it is present and expressing active solidarity with others experiencing racism and other forms of bias. To that end, the school is committed to supporting ongoing anti-racism and anti-bias training for all staff members and

to constantly evaluate all decisions made in the school from this lens by raising consciousness levels around all forms of bias. This perspective should inform all policies, particularly the Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy, and is evidenced in planning related to the Learn Together Curriculum. It requires a regular review of practices and procedures and the promotion of a culture that encourages pupils, staff and parents to be confident in challenging any examples of bias. Rather than stepping back from such discussions, the school will endeavour to regularly speak about issues of bias and will work towards being culturally responsive.

Additional Needs

Parents may seek to enrol any child in the school regardless of ability or the need for educational supports. The school will work with parents, support services and the National Council for Special Education. The goal of equity of learning experience endeavours to ensure children are supported to participate to their fullest extent and to experience success regardless of ability. Support Plans are agreed and incorporate input from all stakeholders. Support teaching is provided, and the allocation of this support teaching is determined in consideration of the needs of all children in the school community. The establishment of autism classes in September 2025 will provide another option for children who are eligible for placement in these learning settings, and efforts will be made to support integration and cooperation among all members of the school community with the guiding principle being what is best for each individual child.

Multi-Level Classes

Though not required at present, if multi-level classes have to be created this shall be done solely on the basis of children's ages except in very special circumstances. In these circumstances, a meeting (or meetings) will be held with the principal, teacher and parents.

Dress

All pupils shall wear clothes of their own choice. People who wear items for religious reasons are not discriminated against. All religious garments are acceptable clothing in the school. Clothing with images or words that are deemed offensive or inappropriate for young children should not be worn. Staff members may ask a child to cover an item of clothing in such situations. For health and safety reasons, sharp items or items that can be used to cause injury should not be brought into school. Also, we discourage children from wearing any garment that may cause themselves or others harm or injury. Therefore, high-heeled shoes, flip-flops and hooped earrings should not be worn. Also, children are advised to dress comfortably according to the weather.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was originally drafted and ratified in 2017. It was reviewed, modified and ratified in 2021 and again on the date below. The policy is available on the school website for access at any time. It will be reviewed as necessary but no later than 2028.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 12/05/2025