



# Mount Anville

Montessori Junior School

2½ -12 years

## **Diversity and Equality Policy** **Ratified by Board of Management on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

### **A. Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity and support to managers, staff, children and their families. Mount Anville Montessori Junior School is a sacred Heart School. This policy is essential to ensure that our school is inclusive and fair and that any discriminatory incidents will be appropriately addressed. Management and each member of staff have a duty not to discriminate on the grounds of disability, marital status, race, family status, membership of the Travelling community, sexual orientation, religious belief, age and gender. Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004.

‘Diversity’ refers to:

Acceptance of all, regardless of social class, gender, returned Irish emigrants, family status, minority groups and the majority group.

‘Equality’ refers to:

The importance of recognising different individual needs and of ensuring equity in terms of access, participation and benefits for all children and their families. It is therefore not about treating people the ‘same’.

Inclusion has been described as follows;

“Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Within the field of education this is reflected in the development of strategies that seek to bring about a genuine equalisation of opportunity.”

The Salamanca World Statement (UNESCO 1994:11) – signed by 92 governments

### **B. Commitment to inclusion**

Mount Anville Montessori Junior School are dedicated to develop and support an inclusive environment for all the children and staff within our setting. Mount Anville Montessori Junior School will endeavour to support our children as so far is possible to:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Know they belong and are valued as unique individuals
- Feel strong and confident about their identity
- Know their cultural backgrounds are respected and valued
- Learn in groups that allow them all to experience success
- Engage with materials and experiences that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds, gender and ability (culturally diverse toys, instruments, play equipment and posters/photos)
- MAMJS have a diverse curriculum that celebrates a variety of learning styles

- All children will participate fully in our school, and we will be cognisant of children with particular and special needs

The Mount Anville Montessori Junior School Community embrace equality and diversity. We value the ability, individuality and cultural background of all the children. We aim to show this through an inclusive environment, our interactions with children and their families and through our curriculum planning which will provide opportunities for children to reach their full potential as active learners. We will support children to respect difference and empower them to deal with situations that may arise around discrimination.

**Inclusion** is “a process involving a programme, curriculum or education environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong, and can progress to his/her full potential in all areas of development”

(National Childcare Strategy, 2006-2010)

### **C. Inclusive Environment**

The Mount Anville Montessori Junior School community aim to provide an inclusive environment as so far is possible through:

- Respecting all children, their families and their rights i.e. freedom of choice, meeting their needs, listening and understanding, good communication with parents
- Embracing and respecting all cultures, nationalities, race, religions and abilities that attend the setting
- Confidentiality is of paramount importance
- Providing resources that show diversity and challenge stereotypes i.e. visuals, family walls, books, jigsaws, dress-up wardrobe has a variety of costumes not gender specific
- Labelling the equipment and the environment with simple words and/or photos
- Having our service accessible for children with additional needs
- Having toys and resources accessible to the children
- Ensuring all staff have the necessary qualifications required.

### **D. MAMJS Staff**

The staff of MAMJS will promote diversity, equality and inclusion both in the classroom, the yard and around our school campus. They will endeavor to:

- Remove assumptions and judgments about cultural and linguistic background of all families
- Regard all individuals equally, and provide equal opportunities for all children of all backgrounds
- Actively intervene in situations when bias is shown and encourage children to challenge bias
- Work as a team to support children with additional support needs
- Adhere to the MAMJS Inclusion Charter

## **E. Interactions with children and their families**

- For each child and family that start attending our setting, we should ensure that we are welcoming, friendly and we get to know them all individually.
- Practitioners strive to be good role models. As questions arise from children, we get down to the child's level, we listen, we understand and we answer honestly.
- We encourage children to express their feelings, develop decision making skills and conflict resolution skills
- Practitioners need to be open minded and aware that they may not permit their pre-conceived ideas impact the way they view or treat a child or adult
- We know and respect our school ethos and our Diversity and Equality Policy

## **F. Our Curriculum**

Within the Aistear Curriculum one of the four main themes is Identity and Belonging. It is our responsibility to ensure the children are provided with the opportunities to develop a positive sense of who they are, and that they are valued and respected within our school.

## **G. Families attending MAMJS are supported to:**

- Consult with MAMJS and the teacher to minimise conflict with the school ethos and family values
- Parents are invited to become involved in various policies that are being developed
- Linking families to mentor new families with those already established and may support translation
- Participate in our curriculum to embrace food, art, music and languages from other countries and cultures.

## **H. Dealing with discriminatory incidents**

**Each member of staff is required to support this policy and to address any possible discriminatory incident in accordance with this policy.**

- **We will endeavor to** recognise and acknowledge what is happening.
- **We will endeavor to** know how to respond sensitively and appropriately, e.g. when a child makes a statement or asks a question that reveals bias or when a child teases or excludes another child.
- It should be a known rule that exclusion or name-calling is not acceptable, and this must be discussed with the children in a sensitive and un-authoritative manner.
- When a child says something hurtful to another child that refers to difference, intervene immediately and remind her or him of the rule. Do not ignore.
- Determine the real reasons for the conflict or exclusion.
- Comfort the child who was a target of discrimination and help him/her verbalise their feelings. Equally support the child who caused the hurt.
- Children need to be helped to recognise what is happening and learn that it is equally unacceptable for them to be a target or to target others.

- If fear or prejudice is the underlying reason, try to learn more about the child's bias and make a long term plan to address the issue. This will involve discussion with the families and other staff.
- Intervention should be immediate and will need to be followed up with both children.
  - Listen to the children about what happened, what was said and how they felt. By practitioners showing empathy and expressing how we are feeling, will help the children express their feelings
  - We would ask questions about what happened and for ideas from the children how they are going to resolve the situation. Restorative practices are vital in these situations
  - Some issues may arise from what the child may hear outside our setting and if this happens we would have to speak to the parents in a private and confidential manner. We would explain to them what was said or done. We would explain that we cannot have any anti-bias or anti-discriminatory language or behaviour in our setting.
  - An incident would be considered from the perspective of all individuals and action needs to be taken e.g. circle time, group discussion, SPHE curriculum or the Stay Safe programme.
  - By an adult showing empathy and expressing our feelings, we help children to express their feelings
  - All our staff are role models for the children

**I. Procedures for parents for resolving disagreements, conflicts who disagree with the practice of the diversity and equality approach, should follow our Code of Behaviour or Complaint's policy**

**J. Members of staff who wish to raise concerns regarding adherence to this policy by either parents or other staff members, should speak to the Principal in the first instance.** Other Policies that are linked with the Diversity and Equality Policy are:

- Admissions policy
- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection policy
- Staff Continuing Development policy
- Supervision policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Complaints policy
- Partnership with Parents
- Recruitment policy
- Students and Volunteers
- Legislation
  - Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years) Regulations 2016
  - The Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015
  - The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004
  - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 29 and 30)
  - The Disability Act 2005
  - The Special Needs Legislation, known as the EPSEN Act 2004

Our Goals co-ordinator is also our Inclusion co-ordinator supported by the MAMJS Community.

## **Introduction to Irish Anti-Discrimination Legislation**

### 1998: The Employment Equality Act

Makes discrimination in employment unlawful on nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Travelling community. The Act covers access to employment, conditions of employment, equal pay, promotion, training and work experience, all of which is relevant to employment within the childcare sector.

### 2000: The Equal Status Act

Prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods, services, disposal of property and access to education, on any of the nine grounds referred to under the Employment Equality Act 1998. It prohibits discrimination in all public and private services (subject to some exceptions) including educational establishments. Educational institutions have a duty, subject to some exceptions, not to discriminate in terms of admission, access, terms or conditions and expulsion.

### 2004: The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2004 amended the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000 to align these Acts with new EU Equality Directives.

### 2005: The Disability Act

The Disability Act 2005 is a cross-Departmental measure which promotes equality and social inclusion for people with disabilities with particular provisions governing access to services and employment and the assessment of health and educational needs. "Disability" is defined as "a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment".

### Diversity and Equality Guidelines for Childcare Providers

#### 2000: Education (Welfare) Act

Obliges schools to have written Codes of Practice, to be shown to parents on enrolment of children. These must honour the provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000 as they apply to schools. The Act provides an education-specific legal basis for anti-racism, inclusionary policies and codes of practice.