



**Guidelines for Second Level Schools on  
Embedding Equality in School  
Development Planning**



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## Introduction

These guidelines have been prepared by the Equality Authority in partnership with the School Development Planning Initiative. They are intended to assist schools to meet the ambition of the equality legislation and to embed equality in school development planning.

The purposes of these guidelines are

- to give an overview of equality issues across the nine grounds that may arise in schools,
- to describe how equality can inform the process of preparing a school development plan, and
- to provide practical advice for schools on how they can identify equality objectives relevant to their own situation and on how they can take steps to achieve those equality objectives.

The aim is to assist schools to embed equality in their planning process and in their plan.

The Equality Authority and the School Development Planning Initiative drew on the expertise and support of a number of organisations and individuals when preparing these guidelines.

We were advised by a steering committee whose membership was drawn from the key education partners at second level: Eileen Salmon, of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools; Máire Mulcahy and Sheila Parsons of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland; Maureen Bohan of the Department of Education and Science; Deirdre Keogh and Councillor Mary Bohan of the Irish Vocational Education Association; Bernadette Kinsella of the Joint Managerial Body; Dolores Mullins of the School Development Planning Initiative; and Annette Dolan of the Teachers' Union of Ireland.

The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee was commissioned to undertake the initial drafting of the guidelines. A key part of the work they undertook was consultation with teachers across a wide range of schools on the practical equality issues arising in schools in Ireland. The CDU team provided invaluable expertise in developing a framework which embeds equality into core areas of school life and school development planning. The team was led by Mary Gannon, and her colleagues who worked on the guidelines were Sandra Irwin-Gowran and Máirín Kenny.

We hope that these guidelines prove to be a practical, useful resource that assists schools in playing their part to create a culture supportive of equality.

## Section 1 Equality and Education: Vision

### 1.1 The inclusive school

These guidelines are underpinned by a vision of the inclusive school. It is defined as follows:

*The inclusive school prevents and combats discrimination. It is one that respects, values and accommodates diversity across all nine grounds in the equality legislation – gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. It seeks positive experiences, a sense of belonging and outcomes for all students across the nine grounds. Outcomes include access, participation, personal development and achieving education credentials.*

*Schools and the Equal Status Acts (2nd edition, 2005, page 1)*

In working towards the realisation of this vision of the inclusive school, questions can arise about the practicalities of implementing such a vision, about the vision itself, and about where we stand personally as educators. Positive outcomes in access, participation, personal development and educational credentials are challenging goals, but how realistic are they? What impact will these goals have on our practice as educators? What impact will they have on our schools?

The inclusive school is central to achieving equality for all groups across the nine grounds named in the equality legislation. In order to achieve equality, it is important to begin by being clear about what we mean by equality and by building understanding and awareness of equality as it relates to peoples' lives – in particular, the lives of those within the school community.

This section outlines four dimensions of equality implicit in the vision of the inclusive school. These four dimensions provide a framework within which school development planning can take place. The four dimensions within this framework define equality as it relates to:

- *resources*, which refers to access to and the distribution of goods and benefits, including educational credentials and personal development;
- *recognition*, which refers to respect for diversity and giving status to and valuing groups across the nine grounds named in the equality legislation;
- *representation*, which refers to access to and participation in decision-making, including participation by the full diversity of staff and students; and
- *relationships*, which refers to relationships of respect, care and solidarity for all groups.

In practice, the four dimensions are interlinked: inequality of respect, value or status for a group contributes to inequality in that group's access to resources and benefits; a lack of voice in decision-making processes results in a group being denied status as equals; and so on. Neither is there a hierarchy of importance between the four dimensions. However, it is important to understand the focus of each domain.

## **1.2 Equality as it relates to resources**

Equality of resources concerns access to resources, goods, services and benefits.

Inequality in this dimension includes well-known inequalities in educational participation and attainment for a number of groups across the nine grounds, including Travellers, students with disabilities and boys.

Inequalities also exist in relation to access to resources to enable all groups across the nine grounds to attain positive outcomes from education. This can reflect the fact that some groups need more resources than others if they are to benefit equally from education – as is the case for many students with disabilities. Other inequalities in access to resources may arise from traditions in spending in some schools – for example, if students in metalwork (who are predominantly male) are supplied with raw materials but students in home economics (who are predominantly female) are required to supply their own materials.

A third way in which inequality in this dimension can arise in an educational setting is if subject choices, work experience, etc., are offered to groups across the nine grounds in ways that restrict career options or access to further or higher education.

The inclusive school will seek and allocate resources according to need and will take positive action for students who are at a disadvantage where this is necessary and appropriate. Working to achieve equality in this dimension does not mean seeking the same level of attainment or achievement for every student. Rather, the aim of this dimension of equality is that all students from all groups across the nine grounds reach their full potential, according to their needs, aptitudes and interests.

## **1.3 Equality of recognition**

Equality of recognition is about accommodating, respecting and valuing difference across the nine grounds. It entails realising that there is more than one valid way of living and being and more than one valid way of doing things, and it entails respecting ways that are different from one's own.

Inequality of recognition can occur in three ways. One of these is invisibility. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual orientations are often left out of discussions in relationships and sexuality education. The inclusive school will seek to address invisibility by respecting and valuing diversity across all the nine grounds. This needs to start with the recognition that difference exists and is present within the school and its wider community.

A second way in which inequality of recognition can occur could be described as 'mis-recognition'. This occurs where a difference is acknowledged but incorrect assumptions are made about what it means in practice. Some examples would be assuming that Nigerian students need English language support, that boys are naturally better at metalwork, that male teachers are better suited to posts of responsibility that focus on discipline, or that female teachers are better suited to posts of responsibility with pastoral or caring roles.

A third way in which inequality of recognition can arise is where a difference is denigrated or derided. Examples would be where Black or minority ethnic students are subjected to harassment, or where a nomadic way of life is described as abnormal.

The inclusive school will value and respect diversity amongst teachers, students and other members of the school community.

### **1.4 Equality in representation**

This dimension of equality is concerned with ensuring that all groups participate in making decisions on matters that affect them and that their perspective is taken into account when decisions are made.

Inequalities in this dimension include the under-representation of members of particular groups across the nine grounds in decision-making bodies, including in managerial roles or on boards and committees in schools or other institutions in society. A second way in which inequality can arise is through a lack of consultation or of other forms of participation in decision-making for groups across the nine grounds. This is important because it cannot be assumed that the presence of individuals from groups across the nine grounds in management structures will necessarily result in the views of those who experience inequality being taken into account in decisions.

Two challenges can arise in seeking to implement equality in representation, and both are relevant to schools. One is putting in place decision-making processes in a way that meaningfully includes the voices of different groups in the school community: students, non-



managerial staff (including non-teaching staff), and parents.<sup>1</sup> The second challenge is ensuring participation within these parties that make up the school community of the full diversity of the groups across all nine grounds.

Achieving equality in this domain will require that participation and representation are genuine, and that the school is conscious that presence does not always mean that everyone's voice, opinions or concerns are heard. It can mean taking account of barriers that may prevent some groups from contributing.

The inclusive school will work towards creating the conditions to ensure that all voices are heard, whether that be within the parents' association, the student council or staff meetings. Steps to achieve equality of representation by including the voices of those who experience inequalities in this domain are outlined in Part IV.

### **1.5 Equality as it applies to relationships**

This dimension of equality is concerned with relationships of care, solidarity, support, respect and trust.

Inequality arises when harassment and bullying occur, or when people are patronised, treated with mistrust or not included fully in all of the activities of the school. It can also arise when the needs of members of the school community who have caring roles – including, for example, students who are pregnant or parents, and students who may have caring responsibilities for parents with disabilities – are not accommodated.

Equality in this dimension seeks to value and encourage respectful interaction amongst and between groups across the nine grounds. It recognises and values the importance of the relationships that members of the school community have both with other members of the school and with those outside the school, including their families, and accommodates the different needs that those relationships can generate for different students.

Ultimately, this dimension is concerned with creating conditions for people to interact and work together such that relationships of care and solidarity can thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> An inclusive approach to decision-making does not require school leaders or managers to relinquish responsibility or to 'hand over' power. Rather, it requires them to ensure that the views of those who will be affected by decisions are regarded as legitimate and valid, and are genuinely taken into account in reaching those decisions.

## 1.6 Applying the four equality dimensions

All four dimensions can present challenges for schools in two ways. The first concerns the benefits or disadvantages experienced by groups that are present or could be present in the school. For example, in relation to the resources dimension of equality, questions can arise about how well male and female students do in the State examinations or about the presence in or absence from the school of Travellers or students with disabilities. With regard to the relationships dimension of equality, the issue is whether any groups across the nine grounds experience harassment or are patronised in school.

The second way the four dimensions present a challenge is in the messages that the school conveys about equality and about groups that experience inequality. The school curriculum has obvious importance in this regard. However, the challenges go beyond considerations of the formal curriculum to include questions about practices – both formal and informal – in the school that convey messages about equality or groups that experience inequality. This second aspect means that all dimensions and grounds are relevant to all schools – including, for example, that gender equality is an issue that single-sex schools need to address or that equality for Travellers is relevant for a school that has no members of the Traveller community living in its catchment area.

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## Section 2 Equality and Education: Attitudes to Diversity

How schools respond to and plan for diversity and equality is to a great extent determined by their perceptions of and attitudes to difference. In order to help schools reflect on their perceptions, attitudes and values, short snapshots of seven common ways of viewing diversity and equality are provided below.

### 2.1 Assimilation – Fitting in

*“If students decide to come to this school, they have to fit with ‘our’ way, the ‘accepted’ way of doing and seeing things.”*

In this model, students are expected to adapt to the existing system, values and norms of the school, which will not change. When assimilation is demanded, students are expected to suppress aspects of their identity that do not fit in with ‘our way’: being Irish, settled, Catholic or Christian, white, heterosexual and English speaking. This approach denies the right of individuals across the nine grounds to their identities.

### 2.2 Diversity blindness or silence – Ignoring differences

*“All students are essentially the same and they should be treated identically. We should not draw attention to difference.”*

This model is often based on a belief that if some students are treated differently from others, this will lead to resentment, divisiveness, bullying, prejudice or harassment. It can also stem from a belief that certain issues, such as sexual orientation, are not the proper concern of schools and should be ignored. While it is important to recognise the similarities that exist between all people, the non-recognition of central aspects of students’ identities by the school is detrimental to self-esteem, may negatively affect students’ academic progress and social status, and may fail to protect them from discrimination.

### 2.3 Labelling – Seeing only what is ‘different’

*“She is the gay [or: Traveller, disabled, Muslim, etc.] student.”*

Labelling is the reduction of a person’s identity to one characteristic that makes them different from the majority, such as their disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Labelling is often linked to stereotyping – that is, the making of unwarranted assumptions about people based on their membership of

a particular group. The assumptions made in stereotyping may be either negative or positive – for example, ‘Africans are good dancers’, or ‘young people are irresponsible’, or ‘young people are enthusiastic’. Labelling and stereotyping can result in failure to recognise the occurrence of multiple identities and associated multiple discrimination – for example, the experience of some girls from minority ethnic groups, or of students with disabilities who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Labelling also contributes to those who are different in some way from the majority being seen as ‘them’, with the majority ‘us’ being regarded as the norm.

### **2.4 A charity approach – Feeling sorry for them**

*“It is our duty to take care of and help disadvantaged students – the poor, the disabled, Travellers and other minority ethnic students.”*

Feeling sorry for those perceived to be less fortunate may perpetuate dependency and lack of status on the part of those being ‘helped’. It can also lead to resentment on the part of staff if those being ‘helped’ are not appreciative of what is done for them, or make demands for rights or recognition which the school is not prepared to facilitate. It can also be patronising to students from groups that experience inequality.

### **2.5 Negative recognition – Seeing diversity as a problem**

*“We already have our fair share of Traveller [or: disabled, Muslim, special needs] students. Other schools should share the burden.”*

*“The only time she ever called me a Traveller was when I was in trouble.”*

Negative recognition refers to the perception of diversity or of certain groups as a problem. It may be reflected in a reluctance to accept certain groups of students; a perception of certain groups of students as being difficult; an implicit or explicit condemnation of certain types of family status, sexual orientation or religious beliefs; or a refusal to reflect, to accommodate or to value diverse identities in school activities or in the curriculum.

### **2.6 Limited recognition – So far but no further**

*“We’ll acknowledge their culture through special intercultural events, but don’t ask me to change the way I teach.”*

*“We’ll ensure access for a wheelchair user, but not adapt a class or extra-curricular activity to ensure that she can take part.”*

Limited recognition often means that schools 'do something special' to recognise diversity, but do not adequately reflect on whether their everyday practice accommodates, respects and values diversity or, instead, ignores it or aspects of it. Limited recognition can also occur where schools resist change in their traditional practices, where minority groups challenge the school's norms, or where a staff member feels unprepared or under-resourced to respond to growing diversity.

### **2.7 Diversity and equality – Diversity is normal and good**

*"All people in this school have similarities and differences, and our policies, practice and curriculum reflect that. At times we may give special recognition to different groups within the school, but we also ensure that they are included and recognised in mainstream school life."*

*"Our school welcomes and includes students, staff and parents from all backgrounds and groups. We try to provide an education which meets the needs of all."*

This approach means that schools recognise diverse identities in a positive way, so that diversity is normalised and valued in ways which do not unintentionally spotlight, marginalise, or exoticise students, staff, parents or guardians who are different from the majority. Proper recognition of diversity entails an active commitment to accommodating, respecting and valuing diversity in order to achieve equality.

This approach, which is grounded in human rights and the concept of equality as described in Section 1, provides the basis for schools to work towards creating an inclusive environment within which all members of the school community can be recognised, respected and valued, and in which each individual can grow and develop.

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## Section 3 Equality, Education and Legislation

The first part of this section provides a summary of the main points of the Equal Status Acts as they apply to schools. The information booklet *Schools and the Equal Status Acts* (published by the Department of Education and Science and the Equality Authority) provides a more comprehensive account of the relevant issues. The section concludes with a brief summary of provisions in education legislation that are also relevant to equality.

### 3.1 The Equal Status Acts

The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination and harassment and promote equality on nine grounds.

#### *The nine grounds*

The nine grounds named in the Equal Status Acts are:

- *Gender* – being male or female (the European Court of Justice has held that discrimination against a transsexual person also constitutes discrimination on the ground of sex)
- *Marital status*<sup>2</sup> – being single, married, separated, divorced or widowed
- *Family status* – (i) being pregnant; or (ii) having responsibility as a parent for a person under 18 years; or (iii) having responsibility as a parent or the resident primary carer for an adult with a disability who needs care or support on a continuing, regular or frequent basis
- *Sexual orientation* – being heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual
- *Religion* – having religious beliefs or having none; the term 'religious belief' includes religious background or outlook
- *Age* – generally, this applies to everybody over 18<sup>3</sup> (an exception concerns the provision of motor insurance to drivers aged under 18)
- *Disability* – the term 'disability' is broadly defined and covers a wide range of impairments and illnesses, including all physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities
- *Race* – includes race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins
- *Membership of the Traveller community* – people who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified by both Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as having a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland

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2. When the Civil Partnership Bill becomes law, the name of this ground will be changed to 'civil status', and the status of being in a civil partnership will be added to the definition.

3. Under the other main piece of equality legislation, the Employment Equality Acts, a further difference applies in relation to the provision of vocational training, where the age ground applies in relation to persons above the maximum age at which a person is statutorily obliged to attend school – currently 16 years of age.

### *Discrimination*

Discrimination has a specific meaning in the Equal Status Acts. There are a number of different types of discrimination.

- 'Direct' discrimination occurs if a person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation on the basis of any of the nine grounds. It covers differences in how the person is treated, has been treated, or would be treated.
- Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision puts a person under one of the nine grounds at a particular disadvantage, unless the provision is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that legitimate aim are appropriate and necessary.
- Discrimination by association occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they are associated with somebody who comes under any of the nine grounds.

In relation to the disability ground, discrimination also occurs if a service provider fails to provide special treatment or facilities or to make adjustments to enable a person with a disability to participate in the school (or aspects of school), if it would be unduly difficult or impossible to participate without that special treatment or without those facilities or adjustments. However, there is no obligation to provide special treatment, facilities or adjustments if they give rise to anything more than a 'nominal cost'. The meaning of 'nominal cost' will depend on the circumstances such as the size of and resources available to the organisation. A large and well resourced organisation is more likely to be able to afford a higher level of cost in making reasonable accommodation than a small one is. If the State provides grants or other resources for assisting in providing special treatment or facilities, there may be an onus on a school to avail of these. Also, where a person has a disability that could cause harm to the person or to others, treating the person differently to the extent reasonably necessary to prevent such harm does not constitute discrimination.

Discrimination can also consist of treating somebody less favourably

- because they made a complaint to the Equality Tribunal, or
- because they are a witness to any proceedings under the Equal Status Acts, or
- because they oppose by lawful means anything that is unlawful under the Equal Status Acts, or
- because they give notice that they intend to do any of these.

This form of discrimination is called victimisation and is also prohibited by the equality legislation.

### *Harassment and sexual harassment*

- Harassment means any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds.
- Sexual harassment means any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

In both cases, it is conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

It should be noted that the legal definitions of harassment and sexual harassment are not the same as the definition of bullying contained in Department of Education and Science circulars. The key differences are:

- first, bullying entails ongoing and systematic behaviour, whereas a single incident of harassment can be a breach of the Equal Status Acts; and
- second, bullying can apply to reasons that are not linked to the discriminatory grounds whereas harassment prohibited by the Equal Status Acts must be related to one or more of the discriminatory grounds.

Principals, teachers and others in positions of authority in a school may not harass or sexually harass students at the school or anybody who has applied for admission. A person who is responsible for the operation of a school may not permit anybody who has the right to be present at the school to be harassed or sexually harassed. However, they have a defence if they can prove that they took reasonably practicable steps to prevent the sexual harassment or harassment.

### *Positive action*

Service providers are permitted to take positive measures or give preferential treatment. These are permitted where they are genuinely intended to promote equality of opportunity for people who are disadvantaged or who are unlikely to avail of the same opportunities as others. These are also permitted where they are genuinely intended to cater for the special needs of people who need facilities, arrangements, services or assistance that are not required by others.

### *General exemption*

If something is required by another law or a court order, the provisions of the Equal Status Acts cannot be construed as prohibiting it. However, if a school has any discretion about how it meets a legal requirement, then the way that it does so must not breach the Equal Status Acts.



### *Liability*

Schools are liable for anything done by an employee in the course of their work or by an agent, whether or not it was done with the school's knowledge or approval. A school has a defence against being liable for discriminatory actions or harassment carried out by an employee if it can prove that it took such steps as were reasonably practicable to prevent the employee from committing the actions

### *Schools and the Equal Status Acts*

A school must not discriminate in

- the admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of admission of a student,
- the access of a student to a course, facility or benefit,
- any other term or condition of participation in the school, and
- the expulsion of a student or the application of any other sanction against a student.

A number of exemptions to the provisions on discrimination have particular relevance to schools.

(a) Single-sex schools are allowed.

(b) Where the objective of a school is to provide education in an environment that promotes certain religious values, it can

- admit a student of a particular religious denomination in preference to other students or
- refuse to admit a student who is not of that religion provided the school can prove that this refusal is essential to maintain its ethos.

(c) Differences in treatment in relation to sporting facilities or events are allowed on three grounds if they are reasonably necessary taking account of the nature of the facilities or event. The three grounds this exemption applies to are the gender, disability and age grounds.

(d) A school is exempt from the requirement to provide service to a student with a disability only to the extent that doing so would, because of the student's disability, have a seriously detrimental effect on the provision of services to other students or would make it impossible to provide services to other students.

## **3.2 Education legislation**

A number of pieces of legislation governing schools contain provisions that are relevant to equality and that have implications for school planning.

The Education Act 1998 requires that school plans state

- the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school and
- the measures that the school proposes to take to achieve these objectives.

It also states that schools must use their resources to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with disabilities or other special educational needs, are identified and provided for. Schools must promote equality of opportunity for male and female students. They must establish and maintain an admissions policy that provides for maximum accessibility to the school and that ensures that principles of equality are respected.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires schools to prepare a code of behaviour that specifies the standards of behaviour to be observed by students. Accordingly, the code of behaviour should explicitly name the nine grounds and require behaviour that respects diversity across them. It should prohibit harassment and sexual harassment, and set out the steps that will be taken if either of them does occur.<sup>4</sup>

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 also requires schools to prepare school attendance strategies, and these must be developed in consultation with parents of students at the school. A school's attendance strategy should set out how the school takes account of the particular barriers to attendance that some of the groups across the nine grounds encounter.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 seeks to establish the principle of inclusive education for children with special educational needs as a legal requirement. It sets out procedures for conducting assessments of students who have special educational needs and preparing education plans for them. It also permits the designation of the school at which a child with special educational needs is to be educated.

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4. *Schools and the Equal Status Acts*, pp. 18–19.

## **Section 4**

### **Why Embed Equality in School Development Planning?**

There are a number of reasons why schools should embed equality in all aspects of the school's development plan. Some of these could be seen as external to schools – often reflecting changes in the context in which schools operate – but the most important reasons are intrinsic to schools and their purpose and values. The following paragraphs outline the principal reasons for seeking to embed equality in all aspects school development planning.

#### **4.1 The social and moral purpose and vision of the school**

Schools have always had a social and moral vision of what they want to realise through the provision of education. The elements of this vision that are concerned with diversity and equality have often been implicit rather than being explicitly spelt out. The process of planning for equality will enable schools to articulate this purpose and vision.

#### **4.2 The aims of education**

One of the fundamental aims of education is the realisation of the full human potential. It is not possible for students to reach their potential if they are subject to discrimination or hindered from participating in the life of the school. Nor is it possible if students' self-esteem is damaged through non-recognition, misrecognition or denigration of their identity.

Another fundamental aim of education is to prepare young people for daily life as adults in society. A good social order will require respect for difference across the nine grounds, and this in turn means that schools need to teach about difference and to seek to develop students' respect for difference across the nine grounds.

There is a growing awareness in schools of the need to promote equality for all members of the school community. This sense of justice and awareness of rights can be channelled into raising the students' understanding of equality and inclusion, for both themselves and others, and into developing their commitment to playing a role in helping to achieve equality.

Planning in relation to the four dimensions of equality that are described in Section 1 can help ensure that the personal, social, academic and institutional relationships that happen at school further these fundamental aims of education.

### **4.3 Growth in levels of diversity in school communities**

Changes in the student population in recent years have produced a greater level of diversity across some of the equality grounds than was previously experienced in Irish second-level schools. This has been accompanied by a greater visibility for diversity than in the past. The causes of these changes include

- the increase in socio-economic diversity among students,
- the move from special to mainstream provision for students with disabilities and special learning needs,
- the move from segregated to integrated provision for Traveller students,
- the increase in the number of immigrant and minority ethnic students,
- the increasing awareness of the presence of lesbian, gay and bisexual students in our schools, and
- the increasing awareness of caring duties that students in schools can have for members of their families.

Planning for equality is an effective way of recognising and meeting the needs that this diversity gives rise to.

### **4.4 Behaviour and discipline concerns**

There has been growing concern within schools about behaviour, including harassment and bullying. Although these are complex issues with no single, clear solution, the creation of a respectful environment for all members of the school community needs to be part of the approach a school takes. The effective promotion of a climate of respect where bullying and harassment are seen as unacceptable and where the full diversity of students, teachers and parents is recognised and respected requires a meaningful commitment to equality.

### **4.5 Changing teaching and learning methodologies**

There is a growing acceptance of the need for teaching and learning methodologies to be more active and participative, with students taking more responsibility for their own learning. Bodies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Inspectorate advocate approaches that foster the development of students as independent learners, as cooperative learners, as critical thinkers, as problem solvers. Such methodologies, if well-implemented, can contribute to a culture of equality by enabling students to participate at their own pace and in their own way. The planning of methodologies needs to be informed by an awareness of equality issues, however, to ensure that all students across the nine grounds are enabled to experience meaningful participation and to achieve positive outcomes.

#### **4.6 Need for clarity regarding legal responsibilities**

Significant developments in legislation that applies to schools have generated a need for teachers to know and understand their legal responsibilities. Planning for diversity and equality can increase awareness and understanding of legislative requirements among the whole school community, reduce confusion and contribute to the implementation of equality at a fundamental rather than superficial level.

#### **4.7 Changes in the education system**

Among the most significant of the developments in the education system in recent decades have been the introduction of whole school evaluation and continuing reforms of the curriculum.

Whole school evaluation is now part of the state's system of quality assurance for schools. It complements the main mechanisms of quality assurance, which are school development planning and school self-evaluation. Principles of equality are reflected in the framework of school evaluation themes that is used in the quality assurance system.<sup>5</sup> So, schools must ensure that their planning process is informed by a concern for equality. A whole school evaluation examines how well equality requirements are met, focusing especially on how well the school accommodates the needs of particular groups that experience inequality.

A fundamental purpose of curriculum reform is to ensure that the curriculum meets the learning needs of all students. To ensure that this purpose is fulfilled, curriculum planning at school level ought to be imbued with a concern for equality, taking account of the needs of students across the nine equality grounds, and of the potential use of curriculum content to promote equality and respect for diversity.

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5. See *Looking at our School: An Aid to Self-evaluation in Second-level Schools*, Dublin: Department of Education and Science, 2003.

## **Section 5**

### **The Nine Grounds**

This section of the guidelines serves two main purposes. First, it acts as a 'bridge' that links the equality framework (set out in Section 1) and specific equality issues in education. Second, it serves as a 'menu' of equality issues to which schools may refer in reviewing their current practice and developing plans for improvement.

The section is structured as sets of prompt questions highlighting equality issues that may arise for schools under each of the nine equality grounds. The issues are derived from a number of sources: published research on equality in Irish education; consultations with focus groups of teachers; and issues identified by organisations concerned with education and equality (including representatives of second-level school management bodies and teacher unions).

The lists of prompts presented here should be regarded as indicative rather than comprehensive. It is hoped that they include a sufficient range to assist schools in applying an equality lens to their own context, recognising equality-related shortcomings, reflecting on the underlying principles that should govern practice, and identifying issues that they need to address.

## 5.1 Gender

### *Equality of resources*

- Are there gendered patterns in students' take-up of subjects that could have implications for their training, education and career options after school and for their salary prospects?
- Is the range of subjects on offer in the school based on gender stereotyping? Does it unduly limit students' options for study, training and careers on leaving school?
- Does the allocation of resources to subject areas in the school take account of equality for female and male students?
- Are there are gendered patterns among students at risk of early school leaving?

### *Equality of recognition*

- Are there practices in place in this school that contribute to the take-up of subjects according to stereotypical traditional gender roles?
- Are school uniform regulations based on traditional gender stereotypes?
- Are curriculum planning and subject provision in the school unduly influenced by gender stereotyping?
- Is there an imbalance in the celebration and encouragement of sporting and other non-sporting interests that accords more status to boys' sports than to other activities?
- Are there gender imbalances and gender stereotyping in the content of materials that are used in teaching the curriculum?
- Are there gender-based differences in how teachers interact with students during lessons? (For example, according to research, in mathematics boys are asked more questions, and they are more likely to be asked higher order questions; however, girls are more likely to receive praise in response to correct answers.)
- Is professional development on gender equality issues provided for members of staff?
- Is there gender stereotyping in the assignment of duties to staff?

### *Equality of representation*

- Are both genders encouraged to take an active role in representative and decision-making structures, such as the student council or the parents' association?
- Are leadership roles in student councils, boards of management, school committees, etc., influenced by gender stereotypes?
- Is there gender balance on interview panels?

*Equality of relationships*

- Are the school's code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy explicit about the unacceptability of sexist attitudes and behaviour, including harassment and sexual harassment? Do they set out the action that will be taken if incidents do occur?
- Do the code of behaviour and bullying policy prohibit sexual harassment of members of both sexes?



## 5.2 Marital status and family status

### *Equality of resources*

- Does the school support students who become pregnant or who are mothers in continuing their education? (Research shows that these students are at a higher risk of early school leaving, compared with the student population generally.)

### *Equality of recognition*

- Is the diversity of family situations reflected within the curriculum and curricular materials?
- Is the diversity of family situations acknowledged in practical issues such as signing of homework notebooks, parent–teacher meetings, etc.?
- Are students with caring roles recognised as having needs that are similar to those of other young people without these roles?
- Is training provided for all staff on issues relating to pregnant students? Or are such issues left to the guidance counsellor alone?
- Is due consideration given to health and safety issues for pregnant students – for example, in relation to carrying books, to participation in contact sports and to flexibility with the school uniform?
- Is the school sensitive to the flexibility that students with family or caring roles may need in relation to attendance, schoolwork and homework?
- Is low achievement or bad behaviour among children of lone parents attributed by the school to students' family situations?

### *Equality of relationships*

- Is the school sensitive to the need to prevent bullying or harassment because of a student's family situation? Is such bullying or harassment responded to if it does occur?

### 5.3 Sexual orientation

#### *Equality of resources*

- Is there an awareness among staff that exclusion or bullying based on sexual orientation has been found by research to cause negative educational outcomes, including early school leaving, for lesbian, gay or bisexual students? Has the school developed strategies to combat the risk of negative educational outcomes for these students?
- Are resources made available to support students who may face challenges 'coming out' as lesbian, gay or bisexual?

#### *Equality of recognition*

- Is sexual orientation referred to in school policy documents that deal with issues relevant to equality?
- Is there an absence of positive messages about lesbian, gay or bisexual people in the taught curriculum?
- In books used in general subject areas or held in the school library, is heterosexual identity presented as the only healthy expression of sexual identity?
- Does the wording of school policy documents and communications with parents take account of families headed by same-sex parents?
- Is training provided for all staff on issues relating to students' sexual orientation, or are such issues left to SPHE teachers or the guidance counsellor?

#### *Equality of relationships*

- Is homophobic bullying and harassment a significant problem in the school?
- Does the school do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent and respond to homophobic harassment, bullying and name calling?

## 5.4 Religious belief

### *Equality of resources*

- Have students from minority religions difficulty in enrolling in this school?
- Is there alternative provision for students who, for reasons of conscience, do not wish to study the religious education syllabus? Are the arrangements for students in this situation comparable with the arrangements for students who do not take other core subjects?
- Is there provision to facilitate the faith formation or religious practice of students from minority religions?

### *Equality of recognition*

- Does the school recognise and respond to the needs of students and parents whose religious practices differ from those of the majority?
- Are stereotyping or religious prejudice expressed in the behaviour of students, staff or parents, or in textbooks and images?
- Are the key religious feasts and festivals of religions represented in the student cohort recognised or acknowledged? Is the timing of important school events allowed to clash with these dates?
- Are significant school events marked by a religious ceremony that may exclude students who are of a minority religious or secular background?
- Does the school accommodate the requirements of some religions that students wear certain items not traditionally part of Irish school uniforms?
- Is the portrayal of religious and secular diversity accurate in subjects such as history, English and geography?
- Does teaching about different religions give the perspective of those religions?
- Is professional development on religious diversity provided for school staff – both teaching and non-teaching?

### *Equality of representation*

- Are students and parents across all of the religions present in the school – including those of no religion – included in representative and decision-making structures, including the student council and the parents' association?

*Equality of relationships*

- Is respect for religious diversity promoted in the school?

## 5.5 Age

### *Equality of recognition*

- Do curriculum materials present stereotypical portrayals of young people and older people?
- Is there evidence of stereotypical attitudes to young people among members of staff?
- Is there evidence of stereotypical attitudes to older people, including older teachers, among students and parents?
- Is the fact that students aged 18 and over have adult status recognised in school practices in relation to reports, absenteeism, participation in school events, communication with teachers, etc.?

### *Equality of representation*

- Is the student council inclusive and democratic? Are there structures that enable students to participate in decision-making?

## 5.6 Disability

### *Equality of resources*

- Has the school stated a commitment to taking the necessary actions to ensure equality of access and participation for students with disabilities?
- In practice, have students with disabilities equality of access to this school compared with the general student population? Are there procedures in place that may discourage students with disabilities from applying for admission?
- Is provision made to enable students with disabilities to gain access to and participate in school?
- Have students with disabilities access to the full curriculum? Is participation in the full curriculum hindered by the location or layout of specialist classrooms or by the lack of suitably designed equipment?
- Does the school offer a curriculum that accommodates the needs of students with differing abilities?
- Does the career guidance given to students with disabilities encourage them to make choices commensurate with their abilities?
- Has the school up-to-date information on the supports available to students with disabilities in mainstream further and higher education, and in future employment situations?
- Are students with disabilities fully included in school co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?
- Are students with disabilities excluded from activities such as sports or school trips because of undue concerns about health and safety?

### *Equality of recognition*

- Is training provided for all staff on issues relating to students with disabilities, or are such issues left to special education teachers or the guidance counsellor?
- Do able-bodied staff and students manifest attitudes that militate against the full inclusion of students with disabilities – attitudes such as discomfort, pity or low expectations, for example?
- Are assumptions made that students with disabilities are not able to take certain subjects or not able to take them at higher levels?

### *Equality of representation*

- Are students with disabilities enabled to participate in school representative and decision-making bodies such as the student council?

- Are parents with disabilities included in decision-making processes in the school, including the parents' association and other committees that include parent representation?
- Are the parents of students who have disabilities included in decision-making processes in the school, including the parents' association and other committees that include parent representation?

*Equality of relationships*

- Is respect for people with disabilities promoted in the school?
- Does the school do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent and respond to harassment and bullying of students with disabilities?

## 5.7 Race

### *Equality of resources*

- Have students who are learners of English as an additional language full access to the curriculum?
- Is training provided for all teachers across all subject areas in teaching students who are not fluent in the language of the school, or is this area of work assigned exclusively to language support teachers?
- Does the allocation of resources within the school take account of particular needs that may arise in the case of some minority ethnic students, including such issues as language support, mid-year enrolments and communication with parents or guardians?

### *Equality of recognition*

- Are students from all ethnic groups supported in holding a sense of confidence in their own identity?
- Do the pedagogic approaches and teaching methodologies adopted by teachers meet the needs of the student body in its ethnic and linguistic diversity?
- Does the curriculum of the school reflect and value the cultural diversity in Irish society?
- Does the school take account of the need to choose textbooks that include diverse cultural identities and experiences?
- Does the school take account of the need to choose textbooks that do not stereotype minority ethnic groups, and that do not encourage feelings of superiority among the majority?
- Are intercultural events in the school designed in such a way as (i) to avoid presenting minority students' identities in a superficial way or as 'exotic', and (ii) to avoid encouraging the belief that their cultural identities are peripheral to the mainstream curriculum?
- Does the school take account of difficulties it may face in communicating with some minority ethnic parents because of language barriers?
- Does the school take account of difficulties it may face in communicating with some minority ethnic parents because of the parents' unfamiliarity with the school system or because their expectations of education differ from how the Irish education system works?
- Does the school recognise the need for school staff – both teaching and non-teaching – to have professional development and training in relation to interculturalism?



*Equality of representation*

- Are parents from minority ethnic groups included in decision-making processes in the school, including the parents' association and other committees that include parent representation?
- Are students from minority ethnic groups included in the student council?

*Equality of relationships*

- Is mutual respect between people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds promoted in the school?
- Is there evidence of hostility, prejudice and racism on the part of any students or staff towards people from minority ethnic backgrounds?
- Is there positive engagement between minority and majority ethnic students?
- Does the school do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent and respond to racial bullying, name-calling and teasing? Has the school a strategy for dealing with denials of the racist nature of such behaviour?
- Is the inclusion of minority ethnic students hindered by negative attitudes, perceptions and beliefs among some staff, students and parents or guardians?

## 5.8 The Traveller community

### *Equality of resources*

- Does the school take positive steps to enrol Traveller students through the use of explicit inclusive statements in its admissions policy? Are there any procedures in place that inhibit the enrolment of Travellers?
- Does the school take positive steps to encourage the transfer of Traveller students from primary level through liaison with feeder primary schools or Traveller development organisations?
- Given research findings that academic achievement among Traveller students in schools generally is lower than that of settled students, does the school make provision to support and monitor the academic progress of Traveller students?
- Has the school a support strategy to promote the attendance and retention of Traveller students? (Research shows that the drop-out rate of Travellers in second-level schools is high, with many Traveller students leaving school before completing their Junior Certificate.)
- Are Traveller students encouraged to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities?
- Is learning support provided on the basis of need rather than of ethnic identity?
- Is there positive action to employ Travellers with relevant skills or experience?

### *Equality of recognition*

- Does the school support Traveller students in holding a sense of confidence in their own identity?
- Is there recognition of and respect for Traveller culture and identity in the curriculum? Or is there a belief that diversity blindness is the best approach to Traveller culture and identity?
- Is it recognised that, within Traveller culture, young people attain adult status at an earlier age than most non-Travellers and that second-level Traveller students often have family responsibilities at home?
- Is there recognition of the need for professional development of teachers on Traveller culture, in partnership with Traveller organisations and parents?

### *Equality of representation*

- Are decision-making processes in the school, including the parents' association and other committees that include parent representation, inclusive of Traveller parents?
- Are Traveller students included in the student council?

*Equality of relationships*

- Is mutual respect between Traveller students and students from the settled community promoted in the school?
  - Is there evidence of hostility, prejudice or racism on the part of students or staff towards people from the Traveller community?
  - Does the school do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent and respond to harassment and bullying based on ethnic identity?
  - Does the school adopt a rights-based, partnership approach rather than charity-based responses to the needs of Traveller students and parents?
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## Section 6 Priority Equality Areas for Whole-School Planning

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous section focuses on the nine grounds as a framework for exploring equality issues that schools should consider when planning. Here in Section 6, there is a shift in focus: the reflection on equality issues is structured around key aspects of the school as an organisation. Four aspects are considered:

- mission and ethos;
- curriculum;
- care and management of students; and
- staff organisation and staff development.<sup>6</sup>

These aspects have been chosen because they encompass a wide range of the issues that should be addressed in seeking to embed equality in school development planning.

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6. The selection of key aspects was informed by the categorisation of areas for review in school development planning in *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, Appendix 2.

## 6.2 Mission and ethos

Key areas to be considered in relation to mission and ethos include: access and admission; verbal and visual messages; and developing a culture of equality.

### *Access and admission*

Equality of access for students across the nine grounds is important both in its own right and as a prerequisite to equality in educational outcomes. Schools should consider:

- To what extent are our current admissions policies and enrolment procedures explicitly welcoming of all students and parents across all nine grounds?
- Is the information we provide accessible to all prospective parents and students across all nine grounds? Do we take positive steps to make this information available to all potential parents and students?
- Are there barriers that may prevent some students from applying or that may make it more difficult for them to do so?
- Does our actual enrolment reflect the population of groups across the nine grounds in our catchment area?
- Can we improve our current practice to ensure transfer from feeder primary schools of Traveller students and of students with disabilities or special learning needs?
- How inclusive are our induction programmes of students and parents across all nine grounds? Are they designed to accommodate diversity?

### *Verbal and visual messages*

The verbal and visual messages a school sends out about people under each of the nine grounds can greatly contribute to building a culture of equality, or can undermine it. They can have a profound, if unconscious, influence on how people are perceived by others. Schools should consider:

- Do the images displayed in the school show diversity in a positive way that promotes respect for diversity? Is this true of images both in the corridors and classrooms and in the text-books and other learning materials?
- Are any of the groups covered by the nine grounds invisible in the imagery displayed, thus suggesting their lack of value or importance within the school and society? Are all of the groups named in relevant school policies such as those on bullying or admissions?

- Do we create an environment which is visibly positive about diversity, where people can be open about their identity, especially those most at risk of harassment or bullying (such as lesbian, gay or bisexual people; those of minority religions or of no religion; or minority ethnic people, including Travellers)?
- How inclusive of religious and cultural diversity are celebrations of significant school events such as the beginning or end of school year or graduation?
- Does the language we use to describe people promote respect for all those covered under the nine grounds?
- Is our language accurate? For example, do we use terms like 'non-nationals' or 'new Irish' that may be inaccurate and that may disrespect the choice of the people concerned?
- Is our language inclusive of all groups covered under the nine grounds?
- Is our language positive, for example 'wheelchair user' rather than 'wheelchair-bound'; or 'learners of English as an additional language' rather than 'non-English speakers'?
- If we are unsure what term to use, do we know where to find out?

### *Developing a culture of equality*

Developing a culture or ethos of equality in schools is a long-term process affecting every aspect of school life. Schools should consider:

- Does the leadership style in the school reflect an ethos of inclusion, of respect for and valuing of diversity, and of equality?
- Do we actively seek to prevent harassment and to promote relationships of respect, both between individuals and between different groups? Do we promote respect for groups that may not be present in our school at the moment?
- Do we assess how a proposed decision will affect students, staff and parents across all nine grounds before we make it?
- Does our practice within and outside the classroom value the identity of all students, staff and parents, and promote respect for diversity?
- What training for staff and students is needed to support a culture of equality?
- How can we make sure that parents and students from all groups across the nine grounds that are present in the school community participate in our decision-making processes?

### 6.3 Curriculum

Key areas to be considered in curriculum planning include: subject choice and provision; attainment levels; recognition issues; teaching equality; teaching methodologies; extra-curricular activities; and text-books.

#### *Subject choice and provision*

Inequalities in subject choice and provision – both within and between schools – continue to exist. Schools should consider:

- Does our system of subject provision contribute to gender bias or stereotyping – for example, timetabling metalwork or engineering at the same time as home economics or childcare and community care? Do we take steps to encourage and support students to make subject choices that are not stereotypical?
- Do any of our assumptions or practices limit the choices of members of particular groups – for example, do they inhibit Travellers from taking higher level courses, or students for whom English is a second language from taking some subjects or levels?
- Does the range of subjects we offer promote gender equality, or does it limit future study or career pathways in a pattern that reflects gender stereotypes?
- Where students are not taking a subject, do we seek to provide an alternative to remaining in the classroom while not participating in the class?
- Do we make adjustments or provide facilities to enable students with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum?

#### *Attainment levels*

Attainment levels for some groups across the nine grounds are often much lower than their potential. Schools should consider:

- Do we know if there are groups in the school where underachievement is a particular problem?
- Do we know if there are patterns in attainment levels which show that, on average, one group does less well than another?
- Are there any groups across the nine grounds with higher rates of leaving school early?
- Have we lower expectations of some students based on their identity or their family situation? If so, how can we change this?
- Do we encourage all students across the nine grounds to take the highest level of which they are capable in the Junior Cycle to avoid limiting their Senior Cycle options?
- How can we raise expectations of both students and teachers in order to encourage all students to reach their potential?

### *Recognition issues*

Even if some of the nine grounds are not represented in a school's population or catchment area, students need to learn about and to value and respect diversity across all of the grounds. Schools should consider:

- How can each subject best reflect and include the full range of groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds?
- How can the subject content and teaching methodologies encourage and support students to value diversity, while at the same time developing their critical thinking skills?
- How can we best develop attitudes to diversity that are based on the recognition of people's rights and responsibilities rather than on charity or a sense of superiority?

### *Teaching equality*

The curriculum and how a school applies it can play a role in helping students to understand inequality. Schools should consider:

- Do we help students to understand the different forms of inequality?
- Do we provide students with an understanding of the different causes of inequality? Does this cover all of the dimensions of inequality?
- How do we support students to understand and promote equality?
- How can we best empower students to oppose inequality?

### *Teaching methodologies*

Planning of methodologies needs to include consideration of levels of participation and relationships. Schools should consider:

- How can we best encourage and facilitate participation by all students in class and in other learning situations?
- Do we take care to avoid 'segregation within inclusion' by maximising in-class learning for all and minimising separate teaching or withdrawal of students who need additional support?
- What changes do we need to make to our teaching methodologies to accommodate and meet the needs of students from groups across the nine grounds?
- How can we promote active learning so that students can develop mature working relationships and develop responsibility for their own learning?
- Do we ensure that we do not make unwarranted assumptions about so-called 'boys' learning styles' and 'girls' learning styles' in how we teach students?



- If we organise co-curricular activities that have an equality theme (for example, an intercultural week or a campaign on homophobic bullying), do we carefully plan them to ensure that they avoid a superficial or exotic portrayal of different groups and build mutual respect between all students and parents?

### *Extra-curricular activities*

Extra-curricular activities form an important element of a student's learning experience and are an environment where students from different backgrounds can work together and get to know each other. Schools need to consider:

- Does our range of extra-curricular activities meet the needs of the full diversity of students?
- How can we encourage the participation of any groups in the school that have low levels of participation in extra-curricular activities?
- Do we take care to avoid 'segregation within inclusion' in our extra-curricular activities (for example, by including students with intellectual impairments in all activities for a school play – front of house, on- and back-stage – rather than leaving them segregated as a separate mini-act or in 'hidden' roles)?
- Do we ensure that parents and other volunteers who contribute to our extra-curricular activities understand the school's commitment to inclusion across all nine grounds and are committed to reflecting that in their work with us?
- Are we careful that the more informal atmosphere in which extra-curricular activities may take place does not extend to permitting tolerance of harassment or discrimination?

### *Text-books*

Text-books carry powerful hidden messages in the pictures they contain, the stories they tell, or the topics they cover. Schools need to consider:

- Are the text-books we use free from stereotypes or, alternatively, are they used in such a way as to develop students' abilities to recognise and critique stereotyping of all kinds?
- Does our library carry a wide a range of books that reflects and values diversity across all of the nine grounds?

## 6.4 Care and management of students

Key areas to be considered in planning for the care and management of students include: health and safety; pastoral care and student support; code of behaviour and discipline; harassment, bullying, name-calling and slugging; personal development; and guidance.

### *Health and safety*

When health and safety issues are considered in an equality context, schools often focus on students with disabilities and questions about their ability to participate in different elements of school life; other aspects of health and safety tend to be overlooked. Schools need to consider:

- To what extent does our current practice inhibit or facilitate the fullest possible participation by students with disabilities? Before we make decisions concerning students with disabilities, do we fully consult with them, their parents and appropriate experts?
- Have we considered the physical and mental health implications of harassment or bullying of students or staff on any of the nine grounds?
- Do we consider the health and safety needs of pregnant students?
- Have we taken account of health issues like anorexia and the needs of female students in our PE programme?

### *Pastoral care and student support*

The planning of pastoral care and student support must take into account the varying identities and needs of students across all of the nine grounds. Schools should consider:

- How can we effectively support students who have particular pastoral and support needs that are linked to their membership of a group under any of the nine grounds?
- How could peer mentoring, peer learning support or peer conflict resolution programmes contribute to the inclusion of students across all of the nine grounds?
- Are we careful not to equate identity with need – for example, not automatically providing all Travellers with learning support on the basis of ethnicity rather than their actual circumstances?

### *Code of behaviour and discipline*

Sometimes equality is understood as treating everyone the same and it can be difficult for many people to distinguish between inequality and differentiation. Differentiated treatment of students on ethnicity, disability or other grounds is often seen as favouritism or 'letting them get away with it' and can cause resentment among both students and staff. Schools should consider:

- Do we know how to distinguish between situations where differentiation is needed and situations where the same treatment is required?
- Are we consistent in how we treat students?
- Where we need to treat students or staff differently from others, are the reasons for this known<sup>7</sup> and understood by students and staff?
- Are our school rules flexible enough to differentiate between students with particular needs or situations – for example, uniform rules for pregnant students, religious requirements such as fasting or wearing the *hijab* or a turban?
- How do we recognise the rights of students over 18 years in a context of negotiation between students, staff and parents? How do we recognise the growing maturity of all students?

### *Harassment, bullying, name-calling and slagging*

Bullying is a serious issue for many people and affects both staff and students. Schools could be legally liable if they do not take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment on the nine grounds. Name-calling is common in most schools, as are targeted joking and ‘slagging’, all of which could be forms of harassment. Schools should consider:

- How effective are our efforts to prevent harassment from occurring?
- How can we prevent gender-based harassment, bullying, and sexual harassment?
- Are all of the nine grounds explicitly named in our anti-bullying policy and in codes we display in the school or distribute to students?
- Do we challenge all name-calling and teasing or ‘slagging’ rather than take the approach of ‘she [or he] didn’t mean it’? Do we recognise that teasing or ‘slagging’, including teasing on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, can be hurtful even when it is intended to be done in fun?
- How can we best challenge and change a culture of acceptance of name-calling, and ‘slagging’, and how can we protect staff and students against bullying or harassment on any ground, or against sexual harassment?
- Have we considered the organisational and legal implications of harassment or bullying of students or staff on any of the nine grounds?

### *Personal development*

All students, but particularly those at risk of suffering inequality, need to develop respect for and confidence in their own identity, and this needs to be done in a way that does not contribute to stereotyping. Schools should consider:

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7. In a context which safeguards people’s right to privacy.

- How well does what we teach and how we teach it affirm each student's identity and background? Does any of our teaching give a lower status to groups under any of the nine grounds?
- How can we best recognise and acknowledge in our practices the growing maturity of students?
- How can we best support the development of a strong student council, with participation from both junior and senior cycle and across the nine grounds?

### *Guidance*

The guidance programme in schools should be developed in ways which take diversity and equality into account. Schools should consider:

- To what extent does our guidance programme meet the needs of students across all nine grounds?
- Have we examined our assumptions about groups across the nine grounds to ensure that we do not underestimate the potential of students covered by these grounds or inadvertently limit their options?
- Are we sufficiently aware of the information and supports available to students with disabilities entering colleges or employment?
- In counselling students, do we adequately recognise the significance of differences in culture, in religion or arising from membership of a group under any of the other equality grounds?
- Are we able to provide support, or can we seek support from appropriate agencies, for those students who may face challenges related to their identity or status under any of the nine grounds?

## 6.5 Staff organisation and staff development

Key areas to be considered in staff organisation and staff development include: employment; safety and inclusion; and professional development.

### *Employment*

Schools should have an employment equality policy in place. In preparing this employment equality policy, schools should consider:

- Do our recruitment policies, practices and advertisements ensure there is no discrimination?
- Are all of those who are involved in recruitment, in job or role allocation or in promotion decisions fully trained in their responsibilities under the equality legislation?
- Do we make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in recruitment and in allocations of roles within the school, for both teaching and non-teaching staff?
- Do we take a pro-active equality approach in induction programmes for new staff? Do we provide training activities for existing staff to raise awareness and to develop and improve equality skills?
- Is it clearly understood and communicated that promotional prospects are not limited by a teacher's membership of any groups under the nine grounds?
- How can we be proactive in recruiting staff from diverse backgrounds, in both teaching and other roles?
- Do we avoid stereotyping in assigning roles to those who hold posts of responsibility?

### *Safety and inclusion*

Schools should consider:

- How safe and inclusive are the school culture and environment for all staff?
- Are staff across the nine grounds adequately protected from harassment or sexual harassment, or the fear of such harassment? Does this cover possible harassment or sexual harassment by students, by other staff or by visitors? Are our policies and procedures effective and are they widely known and understood?

### *Professional development*

Schools and staff need support in developing a culture of equality. Schools should consider:

- Do all staff in the school have sufficient information and support to reflect on their practice and to develop appropriate responses to diversity and equality issues?
  - Do we develop teachers' skills in respect of the particular needs, experiences and situations for the different groups across the nine grounds?
  - Are diversity and equality issues on the agenda of planning and staff and management meetings?
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## Section 7 Embedding Equality in School Development Planning

Embedding equality within school development planning ensures that equality considerations become an integral part of the planning process. It requires schools to build equality considerations explicitly into all aspects of planning for all areas of school life. Section 7 illustrates how this can be achieved.

Embedding equality in school planning requires three key areas to be addressed throughout the planning process:

- building understanding and awareness,
- including the voice of those who experience inequality, and
- mainstreaming and targeting.

### 7.1. What informs our planning? – Building understanding and awareness

Building understanding and awareness of equality as it relates to the lives of people within the school community is a key task in laying the foundations for equality-focused school planning. It involves building understanding of the concept of equality that is described in Section 1 of these guidelines.

Such foundation-building can be used either as a means of preparing for school development planning or as a way of revitalising a planning process already in progress. It is a way of developing a commitment to equality among members of the school community.

Staff will need some training to develop the requisite awareness, understanding and skills to enable them to be fully supportive of equality in their day-to-day work. The training should engage them in a process of reflection and discussion on:

- their perceptions of and attitudes towards diversity and towards different groups in society that are covered by the equality legislation (see Section 2: *Equality and Education: Attitudes to Diversity*),
- the concept and dimensions of equality (see Section 1: *Equality and Education: Vision*),
- the experience of inequality in the education system of groups across the nine grounds (see Section 5: *The Nine Grounds and Section 6: Priority Equality Areas for Whole-School Planning*), and
- the legislative obligations of the school in relation to equality (see Section 3: *Equality, Education and Legislation*).

The reflection and discussion should be used to identify areas where more focused or particular training may be needed – for example, how all subject teachers can adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of individual groups across the nine grounds, or how particular whole-school policies and practices can accommodate the needs of specific groups across the nine grounds.

Working towards agreement on the school's vision of equality and inclusion is a gradual process. It requires the school to engage in ongoing reflection on its underlying values and to include consideration of these values and their implementation in everyday practice at each stage of the planning process.

### **7.2 Who is involved? – Including the voices of those who experience inequality**

The second key area to consider is the meaningful inclusion in the planning process of representatives of those who experience inequality or who may be at risk of experiencing inequality. An initial review process that focuses on structures for collaboration and consultation may be needed in order to ensure adequate representation in the process.

A democratic and inclusive planning process is essential if schools are to ensure that all of the groups that experience inequality have a voice and contribute to the school's development planning. One of the most effective ways to ensure that all groups are heard is to establish inclusive planning committees, consisting of staff (both teaching and other staff), students, parents, and management. As members of minority groups are often less represented than the majority on student councils and parents' associations, schools may need to ensure their inclusion through co-option. They may also need to co-opt people from outside the school who have expertise in certain areas.

Consultation will need to be carried out in a way that accommodates the needs of different groups. The mechanisms used to consult people will need to take account of barriers or inhibitions some of them may face – for example, accessibility difficulties for people with disabilities, language or literacy barriers, or not being 'out' about family status or sexual orientation.

In relation to certain issues, students, parents or guardians may not always be fully aware of all information relevant to their situation, or able to articulate the challenges and barriers they face in a way that will assist planning. Therefore schools may also need to consult organisations outside the school in order to get information and advice on needs and good practice. For example, a local Traveller or immigrant support group can provide valuable insights into the needs of those groups. National bodies often have recommendations regarding educational practice



which may reflect a broader perspective than might be available to members of an individual school community.

### **7.3 Two approaches: mainstreaming and targeting**

It is common for schools that are planning for equality and inclusion to focus on specific areas of school life and on developing targeted measures that meet the needs of particular groups. In doing this, schools often ignore the need to ensure that general policies, practices and provision value and accommodate diversity, provide benefit for all and promote equality and inclusion for all members of the school community. When working to become an inclusive school, it is essential that the school considers both types of measures. That is, it is necessary that the school development plan includes all of the groups across the nine grounds in all 'mainstream' measures for the school and that it includes targeted measures for particular groups.

#### *Mainstreaming*

Mainstreaming is the consistent application of an equality perspective at all stages of both the development and implementation of every policy, curriculum area and programme. Mainstreaming requires that equality becomes a full part of each planning area, whether or not the policy or area would be identified initially or on a casual assessment as a primary focus for equality. For example, mainstreaming would mean that a review of subject provision accommodates the diversity of groups across the nine grounds and promotes equality. Mainstreaming would also mean that the design and implementation of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning generally also accommodate the diversity of groups across the nine grounds and promote equality.

Thus, when equality is mainstreamed in a school, planning is done on the basis of certain key principles:

- diversity is understood as the norm rather than the exception, and the need to cater for diversity is taken as given;
- diversity is valued, and a person's diverse and multiple identities are recognised and respected; and
- equality considerations are taken as a normal part of the planning process and are incorporated into each stage of the planning cycle.

### *Targeting*

Targeting is the development of activities or policies that focus on

- particular groups that experience inequality or
- particular dimensions of equality across the whole school.

It is about the development of policy or measures designed to address particular inequalities that different groups experience. For example, a targeted initiative could seek to address early school leaving by Travellers, if this is identified as an area of weakness. Another targeted initiative might seek to challenge inequalities in the dimension of relationships (see Section 1) by means of a whole-school programme to promote respect and prevent bullying.

### *A dual approach*

Using only a mainstreaming approach carries a number of risks:

- equality objectives may be incorporated in a minimalist way or get lost among the large number of issues that need to be considered in planning;
- without complementary targeted approaches, mainstreaming may not be sufficient to overcome problems arising from a history of exclusion or inequality; and
- the particular needs of specific groups may not be addressed.

Therefore, schools may need to engage in planning that targets specific equality issues, both in relation to certain groups and in relation to specific equality dimensions across the school as a whole. It is important that schools consider how measures targeted at certain groups can also be applicable to and benefit all.

On the other hand, using only a targeted approach carries the risk that the implications for different groups may be overlooked whenever a 'general' policy or programme of action is developed or implemented. A further risk is that it can result in or contribute to segregation. Moreover, targeting needs to be developed and applied with care to ensure that it does not contribute to stereotyping, to attitudes of pity, to a patronising approach or to limited recognition of the potential of members of groups intended to benefit from targeted measures. Finally, targeting should not be used as a substitute for designing or adjusting 'general' planning to accommodate diversity and achieve equality.

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## Section 8

### Embedding Equality in each Stage of the Planning Process

This section takes the key stages of the school development planning cycle and shows how equality considerations can be embedded in them. This does not require schools to invent new systems or methods of school planning, but rather to ensure that an equality perspective is included at each stage in the process.

The four key stages of the school development planning cycle are: review, design, implementation and evaluation. Particular emphasis is given here to the embedding of equality in the review and design stages. This is because equality and diversity issues need to be dealt with properly in the review and design stages if the school development plan as a whole is to address equality needs.

#### 8.1 Review stage<sup>8</sup>

The review stage is critical in identifying the school's specific equality issues and needs. This subsection sets out a number of techniques that can be applied in the review stage to enable a school community

- to *describe* the present state of the school in relation to equality and inequality,
- to *compare* the present state of the school with the vision of the inclusive school, and
- to *identify* changes that should be made in order to make progress towards the inclusive school.

Five key approaches to help embed equality in the review process are described:

- (1) using an 'equality lens',
- (2) adapting SDPI review worksheets,
- (3) gathering and analysing data and factual information,
- (4) gathering the views of members of the school community, and
- (5) consulting with organisations that represent people who experience inequality.

##### (1) Using an 'equality lens'

One of the simplest and easiest ways of embedding equality in the initial review is to apply an 'equality lens' to exercises where the school's staff consider the current situation. An 'equality lens' can be applied to an

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8. See *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, pp. 18–21, and *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 3: Approaches to Review.

initial review conducted at a whole staff planning meeting or to a SCOT analysis (strengths, challenges, opportunities, threats).

This approach consists of providing staff members with information and prompts concerning equality in education before they undertake a review exercise. For example, copies of Section 5 or Section 6 of these guidelines could be distributed to staff in advance to focus attention on equality issues that could be of relevance to the school. Staff could then be asked to take equality considerations into account when undertaking the review exercise. Such a procedure would ensure that equality issues are included when staff consider the schools' strengths and weaknesses.

### *(2) Adapting SDPI review worksheets*

SDPI review worksheets can be adapted to incorporate an equality focus, using, for example, material from Sections 5 and 6 of these guidelines. Worksheets that lend themselves to this approach include:

- *Key Aspects of School Quality* (pp. 3:36–3:39)
- *Checklist of Areas of School Life* (p. 3:41)
- *Staff Questionnaire on School Life* (pp. 3:45–3:46)
- *Parents' Questionnaire* (p. 3:54)
- *Students' Questionnaire* (p. 3:55)

(These worksheets can be found in *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 3: Approaches to Review. They can be downloaded from the Resources section of the SDPI website: **[www.sdpi.ie](http://www.sdpi.ie)**)

Table 1 shows how *Key Aspects of School Quality: Explanatory Notes* could be adapted to incorporate a stronger equality focus.

### *(3) Gathering and analysing data and factual information.*

The gathering, collation and analysis of data are vital components of the review process. It is essential that the analysis of data concerning any aspect of school life deals not only with establishing the overall picture but also with identifying significant patterns in the data. From an equality perspective, this means that, insofar as is possible, data and information should be 'disaggregated' across the nine equality grounds. Factual information such as enrolment applications, attendance records, discipline and bullying records, literacy and numeracy levels, examination results, subject take-up, early school leaving rates, progression to further and higher education, etc., need to be examined to identify any patterns indicating situations of inequality under any of the nine grounds. Such patterns highlight issues that need to be addressed in the planning process.

Table 1 – Possible amendments to sections of Key Aspects of School Quality: Explanatory Notes from *School Development Planning Guidelines for Post-primary Schools*. (The additions are shown in italics and underlined.)

<b>1. Academic achievement</b>
<p>This aspect refers to pupils' academic attainments throughout their school career. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The knowledge and skills that pupils acquire at each stage of their school career</li> <li>• Pupils' rates of progress in relation to expectations based on their prior attainments</li> <li>• The impact of their schooling on inequalities in attainment between the least and the most able pupils</li> <li>• <u><i>Whether there are groups of pupils under any of the nine equality grounds for whom underachievement is a particular problem</i></u></li> <li>• <u><i>The extent to which expectations in respect of pupils' academic attainment is based on their identity or membership of a group under any of the nine equality grounds</i></u></li> <li>• <u><i>The relationship between the school's profile of examination results and the national profile</i></u></li> </ul>
<b>2. Personal and social development</b>
<p>This aspect refers to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The enhancement of pupil qualities such as self-respect, affirmation of their identities, civic responsibility, consideration for others, teamwork, initiative and enterprise</li> <li>• The fostering of concern about issues of inequality and injustice</li> <li>• <u><i>The development of attitudes to diversity that are based on the recognition of people's rights and responsibilities</i></u></li> </ul>
[...]

Table continued

<b>5. Quality of learning and teaching</b>
<p>This aspect refers to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the learning process, as evidenced in pupils' active involvement, motivation, progress, independent thinking, personal responsibility, and interaction</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching process, as evidenced in the range and appropriateness of teaching approaches, clarity of explanations, responsiveness to pupil needs, <i>including needs under any of the nine equality grounds</i>, formative feedback, and interaction,</li> <li>• The school's procedures to encourage and support quality teaching and to foster effective learning</li> </ul>
[...]
<b>7. School as a learning place</b>
<p>This aspect refers to the effectiveness of the school as an organisation in creating a culture that is conducive to learning by all. It involves factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The grouping of pupils to maximise their opportunities to learn</li> <li>• The adaptation of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils</li> <li>• <i>The monitoring of school practices to ensure that pupils' choice of course level or subject is not limited by unwarranted assumptions about groups under any of the nine equality grounds</i></li> <li>• Consistent monitoring of pupil progress and concern for the progress of all pupils</li> <li>• Systems and procedures to foster and support effective teaching</li> <li>• Commitment to continuous improvement</li> </ul>

Table continued

<b>8. School as a social place</b>
<p>This aspect refers to the social climate of the school. It includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of relationships between pupils, between teachers, and between pupils and teachers</li> <li>• Discipline: standards of behaviour, clarity of rules, measures to prevent harassment, and fairness of procedures</li> <li>• Pastoral care, <i><u>including care for students who have particular pastoral and support needs under any of the nine equality grounds</u></i></li> <li>• Opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibility and exercise decision making</li> <li>• Procedures to promote relationships of respect, grounded in an understanding of equality across the nine grounds.</li> </ul>
<b>9. School as a professional place</b>
<p>This aspect refers to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's ability to deal in a professional way with the management of change by means of an appropriate planning and evaluation process</li> <li>• The school's provision for the empowerment, support and professional development of teachers</li> <li>• <i><u>The school's provision of training for all staff to enable them to reflect on their practice and develop appropriate responses to diversity and equality issues</u></i></li> </ul>
[...]

Table continued

<b>11. School and community</b>
<p>This aspect refers to the school's relationship with its community. It includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What the school offers or should offer to the community</li> <li>• What the school does to enhance school–community relationships</li> <li>• The school's approach to consulting with the community <i><u>including with organisations across the nine equality grounds about issues of concern</u></i></li> <li>• The extent to which the community creates a supportive environment for the school</li> <li>• The community as a resource for learning</li> <li>• <i><u>Engagement with local or regional organisations, including organisations across the nine grounds, as a resource for learning</u></i></li> <li>• The community's perception of the school</li> </ul>
<b>12. School and work</b>
<p>This aspect refers to the school's relationship with the world of work. It includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between the school and the world of work</li> <li>• Ensuring that pupils develop the skills and qualities that employers want</li> <li>• <i><u>Ensuring that all pupils have access to a curriculum that facilitates future access to a wide range of careers</u></i></li> <li>• Developing collaborative programmes of vocational and careers education</li> <li>• Cultivating the world of business as a resource for learning and as a source of support and sponsorship for the school</li> </ul>



For a number of the grounds, disaggregation of data information will be relatively easy. Many official records already include information on gender and age; certain resources are linked to grounds such as disability or factors related to ethnicity (for example, where resources are provided for students who are learning English as an additional language or who are members of the Traveller community); and schools may be aware of students whose absences from school are linked to parental status or caring duties.

The key advantage of the use of this approach is that it can provide objective evidence of particular equality needs that might not otherwise be identified. However, the reliability of that evidence depends on the quality of the records that were kept and the decisions that led to them being designed in that way. There are two key limitations of this method. The first is that it is unlikely to provide any insights for a number of the nine equality grounds because the identity of a student under those grounds is not recorded (for example, sexual orientation or family status). The second is that school records are more likely to yield information on the resources dimension of equality than on the other three dimensions of recognition, representation, or relationships (see Section 1 of these guidelines).

#### ***(4) Gathering the views of members of the school community***

Gathering the views of members of the school community is a key activity in the review stage. A number of approaches can be taken to embed equality in this process.

Unit 3 of *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* includes a number of tools that can be used to ascertain the views of parents, students and staff. As noted above (subsection 2), these worksheets can be modified to include equality-focused questions or points taken from Sections 5 or 6 of these equality guidelines. It may also be possible to undertake a small number of equality surveys of students, parents or staff to ascertain their perceptions concerning the incidence of inequality, harassment or discrimination within the school community. Such surveys would need to be designed and conducted with sensitivity and in a way that guaranteed confidentiality.

As indicated in Section 7 of these guidelines, it is vital to include the voices of those who experience inequality in the planning process. In the review stage, it may be necessary to consult separately on an individual or small-group basis with parents and students and staff members who may have particular needs under the nine grounds (such as those with disabilities, from minority ethnic groups or from minority religions, for example). It is unlikely, however, that this approach can be applied across all of the nine grounds (see point (3) above).

*(5) Consulting organisations that represent people who experience inequality*

Organisations outside the school often have information that would prove valuable in the review process. From an equality perspective, the organisations that should be consulted are those representing groups that experience inequality. A school may seek to use such a consultation to focus on specific aspects of its own equality performance, as perceived by local organisations whose membership is drawn from the school's local community. These might include the local disability group, women's network, Traveller organisation, and so on. Alternatively, a school may find it useful to take a broader approach and seek information on concerns with second-level schools generally from the perspective of the groups across the nine grounds. In this case, regional or national organisations representing groups that experience inequality may be consulted. The school should then consider how the issues raised by the organisations apply in its own specific case.

Whichever approach is taken, the purpose is the same: to gather information on issues for groups across the nine grounds that the school needs to take account of in preparing its development plan. A key advantage of consulting organisations representing those who experience inequality is that it gives the school potential access to insights and understandings of specific equality issues that can be difficult to obtain in other ways. In particular, organisations can have broader perspectives and more information than individual members of the school community may have.

### *Outcome of the review stage*

The outcome of the review stage is the identification by the school of priority areas for action, which become the focus of the design stage of school development planning. From an equality perspective, the development priorities selected may include:

- areas that are explicitly related to the vision of the inclusive school, such as provision for students with special educational needs (targeted areas), and
- areas that are not primarily concerned with equality issues, such as partnership with parents (mainstream areas).

When an equality lens is applied in the review stage, the process of data-gathering and analysis highlights issues of concern for groups across the nine grounds in both targeted and mainstream areas of school life. Accordingly, the review stage can create a realisation of the need to accommodate the diversity of groups across the nine grounds in all areas that are prioritised for planning. This awareness is carried forward to the design stage.

## **8.2 Design stage<sup>9</sup>**

The design stage is concerned with devising action plans and policies to address the areas that the school has prioritised for planning. The central equality issue is to ensure that all action plans and policies adequately take account of the practical implications of equality and diversity.

### *Action plans*

An action plan usually focuses on a particular priority. In relation to that priority, it specifies:

- what targets or objectives are to be attained by means of the plan,
- who will do what, when, and with what resources, to attain them,
- what criteria will indicate success in attaining them, and
- what will be done to ascertain how well they are attained.

It is important that equality objectives are included in the action plans for each priority, so that equality will be promoted consistently in all areas of school life and for all members of the school community.

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9. See *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, pp. 21–23, and *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 4: Approaches to Design.

An equality objective is a statement of a change the school is committed to achieving, within a defined timeframe,

- to reduce the inequality experienced by one or more groups across the nine grounds in one or more of the four equality dimensions,
- to achieve equality for groups across the nine grounds,
- to take account of diversity, or
- to prevent discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation.

In line with the dual approach signalled in Sections 7.3 and 8.1, equality objectives may be either *targeted* or *mainstream*.

*Targeted* equality objectives focus on either

- particular groups across the nine grounds that experience inequality or
- particular dimensions of equality across the whole school from the four outlined in Section 1:
  - o resources and access to all of the benefits of education;
  - o recognition and respect for and valuing of diversity;
  - o representation and participation in decision-making, and
  - o relationships of care, solidarity and support.

For example, an objective to increase the attainment in mathematics of a particular group, such as boys or Travellers, would be a targeted equality objective, as would an objective to eliminate 'casual' racist, homophobic or sexist comments in conversations and banter between students.

*Mainstream* objectives differ from targeted objectives in that they are not primarily focused on equality *per se*. Embedding equality in a mainstream objective entails ensuring that the objective includes each of the groups that experience inequality across the nine grounds. For example, if the school has set a mainstream objective of increasing the numbers who take science subjects in the senior cycle, embedding equality means that this objective applies to all students, across all nine grounds. Or, if more effective communication and consultation with parents has been identified as a target, then the mainstreaming approach means that this objective needs to apply to the full diversity of parents across all of the nine grounds.

A good set of equality targets across the range of the school's action plans will include both targeted and mainstream objectives. In addition, it will achieve a balance across the four dimensions of equality.

When specifying targets or objectives, it is important to distinguish between those that relate to outcomes and those that relate to inputs.

- *Outcomes* refer to changes that it is hoped the plan will help to bring about for those whom the school serves. For example, in the case of students, the changes might refer to improved attendance, or

higher attainment levels, while in the case of parents, the changes might relate to increased levels of contact with the school.

- *Inputs* refer to the provision that the school plans to make as part of the effort to achieve a desired outcome. Typically, inputs refer to changes in the school's programme, policy or practice and involve the assignment of resources (in terms of staff, time, activity, and so on). Examples of input targets or objectives would include: to introduce the Leaving Certificate Applied programme; to establish a system of incentives to reward regular attendance; or to prepare an information pack for parents of all incoming first year students.

The distinction between outcome and input may not always be clear-cut, but it is helpful in highlighting the need to focus consistently on the consequences for students of the school's actions.

A sustained example may help to illustrate the difference between input and outcome in practical terms. Suppose that the school has identified poor numeracy and mathematical skills as a particular challenge it needs to respond to. In this case, an *input* objective might be to provide additional contact hours for the weakest group of students in a programme designed to improve their mathematical skills. An *outcome* objective might be to increase the number of students whose grade in mathematics in the Leaving Certificate will give them the option of progressing directly to higher education.

While a mix of types is useful, a set of equality objectives needs to contain outcome objectives. A set where input objectives dominate would be a weak set.

In identifying equality objectives, members of the school community may tend to avoid considering groups whom they see as 'irrelevant' to the school. Clearly, if a school is not co-educational or if there are no Travellers living in its catchment area, for example, then issues such as equality in educational attainment for the groups not present do not arise. However, even in schools where members of some groups are not present, the equality dimensions of recognition and relationships are relevant. The messages that the school conveys about men and women, about people with disabilities, about Travellers and other minority ethnic groups, about lone parents, and so on, are central to equality. Those schools where members of a group that experiences inequality are not present need to ensure that their equality objectives take these dimensions into account.

### *Embedding equality in the action planning process*

A useful and simple way of ensuring that equality is embedded in the process of developing the action plan is for a member of the task group or team involved in working on the plan to take on the role of equality champion. Their role is to prompt the task group or planning team

- to consider equality issues when setting targets or objectives for the action plan,
- to consider equality concerns when addressing mainstream objectives, and
- to assess the actions or tasks or measures that it is proposed to include in the action plan for their likely impact on or usefulness for groups across the nine grounds.<sup>10</sup>

Where a proposed course of action is likely to have an unequal effect on particular groups under the nine grounds, additional or different actions may need to be planned to take account of the differences for those groups. The equality champion on the task group or planning team plays a vital role in ensuring that the set of tasks selected and the resources assigned take account of the situation, identity and experience of all of the groups across the nine grounds.

### *Policies*

A policy is essentially a guideline for dealing with a recurring issue. To address equality issues, it is not sufficient that the school develop an isolated policy on equality. Rather, all school policies should be 'equality-proofed', that is, concern for equality should be integrated into them or woven through them.

Equality proofing a policy involves:

- ensuring the initial research that is carried out when the policy is at the design stage addresses equality issues and consults with relevant groups to ascertain their views,
- considering how the proposed objectives of the policy contribute to the promotion of equality,
- assessing the differential impact that the policy may have on particular groups and ensuring that the policy encompasses the needs of those groups,
- ensuring the success criteria of the policy are compatible with equality criteria,
- involving representatives of particular groups in the design of the policy, where appropriate,

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10. There can be a temptation to deal with the equality aspect of a mainstream objective by a 'cut and paste' fiat that states 'this objective applies equally to all groups'. However, for some mainstream objectives, more may be required. For example, suppose that, as part of a mainstream objective for tackling bullying and harassment, a school has identified tasks that are intended to change a culture among its students that derides the reporting of incidents of harassment or bullying as 'snitching' or 'telling tales'. When the implications of diversity across the nine grounds are considered, it can be seen that some groups have particular concerns which go beyond concerns about 'snitching' that would need to be taken into account when challenging a culture of non-reporting of incidents of harassment and bullying. In the case of homophobic bullying, for example, reporting will also bring up issues of 'coming out' (or being perceived as coming out), and in the case of sexual harassment, the trauma of having been sexually harassed might be a barrier to incidents being reported. These two examples demonstrate the need for a set of actions to be assessed for their likely impact or usefulness for groups across all of the nine grounds.

- ensuring the consultation process on the draft policy seeks responses from representatives of all relevant groups, and
- adopting forms of consultation that encourage participation by minority groups who may find formal meetings and documents forbidding.

Information on policy-writing can be found in *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 4: Approaches to Design. The guidelines are available for download from the Resources section of the SDPI website: [www.sdpi.ie](http://www.sdpi.ie).

### 8.3 Implementation stage<sup>11</sup>

The key issue with embedding equality during the implementation stage is to ensure that the proposed actions for achieving the school's equality objectives are implemented and not deferred or 'squeezed out' by other work. Monitoring procedures can be used

- to check that the proposed actions are taking place as planned,
- to assess whether progress is being made towards achieving the equality objectives,
- to identify any issues emerging for particular groups from the implementation of action plans or policies, and
- to enable a prompt response to any problems that arise.

### 8.4 Evaluation stage<sup>12</sup>

*School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools* states the purpose of the evaluation stage in development planning:

*The evaluation process reviews the extent to which it has been possible to achieve the objectives that were specified in each action plan or project: fully, partly, or not to any significant extent.*

*The outcome of the evaluation feeds in to the next planning cycle.*

- *Projects that were successfully completed may be consolidated and integrated into school life.*
- *Projects whose objectives were partly achieved may be continued into the next cycle, perhaps with modifications arising from the identification of difficulties and barriers to success.*
- *Projects whose objectives were not achieved to any significant extent may be radically revised, or may be replaced by new projects with a better prospect of addressing the particular development priorities.*

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11. See *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, pp. 23–24, and *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 2: Models of School Development Planning.

12. See *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, pp. 24–25, and *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 3: Approaches to Review, and Unit 5: Approaches to Evaluation.

Embedding equality in the evaluation stage involves a number of tasks. The most obvious is to ascertain the extent to which the targeted equality objectives have been attained. However, an adequate evaluation needs to go beyond this to assess the effect on equality in the school of the work done in relation to mainstream objectives.

Schools need to clarify what the evaluation seeks to find out. A useful way of considering this is to ask questions at three 'levels'.

The first level asks to what extent an objective has been met (whether it has been exceeded, met or not met). For targeted equality objectives, the evaluation task at this level is to compare the planned attainment with the actual outcome. For mainstream objectives, embedding equality in the evaluation process at this level involves disaggregating the data, insofar as is possible, for groups across the nine grounds in order to see whether the outcomes are equally distributed across those groups.<sup>13</sup>

The second level asks what the impact on equality was on foot of the implementation of each of the objectives that the school set itself. Evaluating impact needs to look at both targeted and mainstream objectives, and – as before – data regarding mainstream targets will need to be disaggregated in order for the equality dimension to be taken account of.<sup>14</sup>

The third level of evaluation goes beyond assessing whether objectives have been met. It seeks to establish what lessons can be learnt from the experience and process of trying to achieve them. The focus changes from outcomes and impacts to lessons for the future. It is a more challenging activity because it goes beyond simply measuring progress. Two key questions are asked in this level of evaluation:

- The first question is most pertinent when equality objectives have not been fully met, in which case the key issue is to seek to establish why this has been so.<sup>15</sup>
- The second question is particularly useful for equality objectives that have been achieved. This question asks what learning from the work done to achieve them can be applied or adapted for other equality objectives.

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13. This kind of evaluation shares many characteristics with work that was done in the review stage. See Section 8.1. Useful tools are described in *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 3: Approaches to Review, and Unit 5: Approaches to Evaluation.

14. Many of the approaches and tools for undertaking a review can also be applied here. In addition, a number of the specific evaluation tools identified on page 5:9 of *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 5: Approaches to Evaluation, can be particularly useful for assessing the impact of objectives.

15. A number of the techniques identified in *School Development Planning: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, Unit 5: Approaches to Evaluation can be particularly useful in probing the causes for disappointing progress towards attaining targets – for example Force Field Analysis, and Critical Incident Analysis (see page 5:10).



In reflecting on either of these questions – why targets were not met, or what can be adapted or applied elsewhere – it is important to realise that the answers can sometimes be difficult to find. Nevertheless, open consideration of the experience of working to attain objectives can provide valuable insights.

The findings of the evaluation stage should be used to inform the next cycle of development planning and to guide the school community in progressing further towards implementing the vision of the inclusive school.

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## Section 9 Further Resources

### Equality and education

Department of Education and Science and Equality Authority, *Schools and the Equal Status Act*. Second Edition. Dublin: Department of Education and Science & Equality Authority (2005)

Lodge, Anne and Lynch, Kathleen (editors), *Diversity at School*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration (2004)

ASTI and Equality Authority, *Equality and Education: Proceedings of the Joint Equality Authority/ASTI Conference for Second Level Teachers, held on 29th September, 2001*. Dublin: ASTI & Equality Authority (2002)

### Gender

#### *Resources*

Department of Education and Science, *eQuality Measures* [A two-DVD set]. Dublin: Department of Education and Science (2009)

TENI, *Transgender and Gender Diversity Information for Guidance Counsellors*. Dublin: TENI (2009)

Mac an Ghail, Máirtín, Joan Hanafin and Paul F. Conway, *Gender Politics and Exploring Masculinities in Irish Education: Teachers Materials and the Media. Research Report No. 3*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2002)

#### *Organisations*

National Women's Council of Ireland  
9 Marlborough Court, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1  
Tel.: (01) 878 7248  
**[www.nwci.ie](http://www.nwci.ie)**

Transgender Equality Network Ireland – TENI  
Ballast House, Second Floor, Aston Quay, Dublin 2  
Tel.: (01) 633 4687  
**www.teni.ie**

Gender Identity Disorder Ireland – GIDI  
**www.gidi.ie**

## **Marital status & family status**

### *Resource*

Parent Support Programme, *Students Who are Pregnant and Those Who are Parents Within our Education System: Guidelines for Best Practice*.  
Limerick: Parent Support Programme

### *Organisations*

Care Alliance Ireland  
Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7  
Tel.: (01) 874 7776  
**www.carealliance.ie**

The Carers Association  
Market Square, Tullamore, Co Offaly  
Tel.: (057) 932 2920  
**www.carersireland.com**

Caring for Carers Ireland  
Abbey Arcade  
Abbey Street  
Ennis  
Co. Clare  
Tel: (065) 686 6515  
**www.caringforcarers.org**

One Family  
Cherish House, 2 Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin 2  
Tel.: (01) 662 9212.  
**www.onefamily.ie**

One Parent Exchange Network – OPEN  
7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7  
Tel.: (01) 814 8860.  
**www.oneparent.ie**

## Sexual Orientation

### *Resources*

Department of Education and Science and GLEN, *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students in Post-Primary Schools: Guidance for Principals and School Leaders*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science & GLEN (2009)

ASTI, TUI and GLEN, *Teachers Supporting Diversity: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students*. Dublin: ASTI, TUI and GLEN (2009)

BeLonG To Youth Services and Equality Authority, *Making Your School Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students*. Dublin: BeLonG To Youth Services and Equality Authority (2006)

Pobal, *More Than a Phase: A resource for the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Learners*. Dublin: Pobal (2006)

Equality Authority, *Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals*. Dublin: Equality Authority (2002)

### *Organisations*

BeLonG To Youth Services, Parliament House, 13 Parliament Street, Dublin 1 Tel.: (01) 670 6223

**[www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)**

GLEN, 2 Exchange Street Upper, Dublin 8  
Tel.: (01) 672 8650

**[www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)**

## Religion

### *Resource*

Mullally, Aiveen, *Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools*. Dublin: JMB/AMCSS Secretariat (2010)

## Age

### *Resources*

National Youth Council of Ireland and Equality Authority, *Stereotyping of Young People: Resource Pack*. Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland and Equality Authority (2008)

Devlin, Maurice, *Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People*. Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland and Equality Authority (2006)

Keogh, Anna Fiona and Jean Whyte, *Second Level Student Councils in Ireland: A Study of Enablers, Barriers and Supports*. Dublin: National Children's Office (2005)

National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and NYCI, *Guidelines on How to Involve Children and Young People in Your Work*. Dublin: National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and NYCI (2005)

Equality Authority, *Implementing Equality for Older People*. Dublin: Equality Authority (2002)

National Council for the Elderly, *In Due Season: A Programme for Post-Primary Schools About Being Young and Growing Old*. Dublin: National Council for the Elderly (2003) [available at: [http://www.ncaop.ie/publications/research/reports/31\\_In%20Due%20Season.pdf](http://www.ncaop.ie/publications/research/reports/31_In%20Due%20Season.pdf)]

### *Organisations*

(a) Older people  
Active Retirement Ireland  
124 The Capel Building, St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7  
Tel. (01) 873 3836  
**[www.activeirl.ie](http://www.activeirl.ie)**

Age & Opportunity  
Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9  
Tel.: (01) 805 7709  
**[www.ageandopportunity.ie](http://www.ageandopportunity.ie)**

Age Action Ireland  
30–31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2  
Tel. (01) 475 6989  
**[www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie)**

Irish Senior Citizens Parliament  
90 Fairview Strand, Dublin 3  
Tel.: (01) 856 1243  
**iscp.wordpress.com**

Older and Bolder  
Jervis House  
Jervis St.,  
Dublin 1.  
Tel. (01) 878 3623  
**www.olderandbolder.ie**

(b) Young people  
Children's Rights Alliance  
4 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2  
Tel. (01) 662 9400  
**www.childrensrights.ie**

National Youth Council of Ireland  
3 Montague Street, Dublin 2  
Tel.: (01) 478 4122  
**www.youth.ie**

## **Disability**

### *Resources*

Department of Education and Science, *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science (2007)

Department of Education and Science, *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support – Resource Pack for Teachers*. Dublin: Stationery Office (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Art, Craft, Design Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *English Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Home Economics Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Mathematics Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Music Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Physical Education Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Religious Education Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Science Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Social, Personal and Health Education Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Social, Political and Environmental Education: CSPE Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Social, Political and Environmental Education: Geography Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Social, Political and Environmental Education: History Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Technology Education Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post-primary*. Dublin: NCCA (2007)

McCausland, Darren, *International Experience in the Provision of Individual Education Plans for Children with Disabilities*. Dublin: National Disability Authority (2005)

Shevlin, Michael and Richard Rose (editors) *Encouraging Voices: Respecting the Insights of Young People who have been Marginalised*. Dublin: National Disability Authority (2003)

Grogan, Mary, *Partners in Education: A Handbook on Disability Awareness and Inclusive Policies and Practices for Students with Disabilities*. Tullamore: Offaly Centre for Independent Living (2001)

### *Organisations*

Inclusion Ireland  
Unit C2, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1  
Tel.: (01) 855 9891  
**[www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie)**

People with Disabilities in Ireland  
4th Floor Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1 Tel. (01) 872 1744  
**[www.pwdi.ie](http://www.pwdi.ie)**

### **Race & Ethnicity**

#### *Resources*

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Intercultural Education in the Post-primary School. Guidelines for Schools. Enabling Students to Respect and Celebrate Diversity, to Promote Equality and to Challenge Unfair Discrimination*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006)

Lesovitch, Louise, *Roma Educational Needs in Ireland: Context and Challenges*. Dublin: City of Dublin VEC (2005)

Irish Vocational Education Association, *Pilot Framework for Educational Provision for Bilingual Learners Including Asylum Seekers and Refugees Volume II: Second Level*. Dublin: IVEA (2004)

Joint Managerial Body and Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, *Learning for Young Minority Students, Intercultural Education Guidelines for Schools*. Dublin: Joint Managerial Body and Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (2002)



Integrate Ireland, Language and Training, *Integrating Non-English Speaking Students into the School and Curriculum: Handbook for Schools*. Dublin: IILT (2003) [available at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)]

Integrate Ireland, Language and Training, *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks for Non-English-Speaking Pupils at Post-Primary Level*. Dublin: IILT (2002) [available at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)]

Integrate Ireland, Language and Training, *Creating an Intercultural Environment: Experiences and Ideas Provided by Teachers*, Dublin: IILT (2002) [available at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)]

Reception and Integration Agency, *Information Leaflet for Parents of Asylum Seeker and Refugee Children Attending Post-Primary School*. Dublin: Reception and Integration Agency

### **Organisations**

ENAR  
c/o Migrant Rights Centre Ireland,  
55 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1  
Tel.: (01) 889 7570

The Irish Refugee Council  
88 Capel Street, Dublin 1  
Tel.: (01) 873 0042  
&  
1 Bank Place, Ennis, County Clare  
Tel.: (065) 68 22 026  
**[www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie)**

### **Traveller community**

#### **Resources**

Titley, Aoife, *The Irish Traveller Movement Yellow Flag Programme: Handbook for Schools*. Dublin: Irish Traveller Movement (2009)

Irish Traveller Movement, *Inclusion of Travellers in Education*. Dublin: Irish Traveller Movement (2007)

Department of Education and Science, *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools*. Dublin: Stationery Office (2002)

Hegarty, Maria, *Travellers in Education: Strategies for Equality*. Dublin: Irish Traveller Movement

*Organisations*

Irish Traveller Movement  
4–5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2  
Tel.: (01) 679 6577  
**[www.itmtrav.ie](http://www.itmtrav.ie)**

Pavee Point  
46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1  
Tel.: (01) 878 0255  
**[www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)**



