

## 1 STATEMENT OF INCLUSION

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF INCLUSION WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE LGBTQ+ CHILD

Kilcolgan Educate Together by its very nature strives to be an inclusive and welcoming school regardless of social, cultural, religious background, marital status or sexual orientation. This is as much true of students and their families, as it is of staff.

While KETNS strives to be inclusive, it acknowledges there are many different perspectives, and children are free to discuss these respectfully in the safety of their classrooms. A considerable amount of time has been spent in the formulation of this Inclusion Statement and we have been informed by the current debates and highly polarised views that exist about gender and identity issues. Our approach is based on the well-established ethos of the Educate Together schools of pluralism and acceptance. Our school is an early stage in the lives of young people who may need space to explore the parameters of their identities over a much longer educational journey.

It also acknowledges that it is normal for all children to explore their identity. It is important that children have the freedom to do this without the pressure of subscribing to a permanent label as with many things in childhood preferences evolve and change over time. Sometimes children may be definitive about their choices and they may choose to ascribe a particular label to themselves.

### 1.2 A CHILD WANTS TO BE KNOWN AS A DIFFERENT GENDER

The school understands that when a child is born their sex is recorded on their birth cert. In the vast majority of cases this is based on their anatomical presentation at birth. The school acknowledges that some people can feel that the sex recorded on their birth cert does not match the gender they feel they are. If a child wishes to explore what it feels like to be a gender different to the sex on their birth cert the school will meet with the parents and work out how best to support that child going forward including their preferred use of pronouns.

### 1.3 THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

Stereotypes, cultural norms and expectations, gender inequality, human rights and diverse family structures are all topics that are discussed with the children throughout their schooling. As part of this diversity, LGBTQ+ people are represented in the curriculum we teach. As a co-educational and child centred school, the school believes that children should play with a variety of toys and engage in a variety of activities and will challenge children if they believe that certain toys, activities, colours, styles etc are boys/ girls only. We believe that the opportunities in life should be equal for all children regardless of their gender. The school will neither encourage nor discourage a child to conform to a particular gender stereotype.

#### 1.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER QUESTIONING

At Kilcolgan ETNS, all toilets will be gender neutral by September 2022. Changing for swimming will continue to take place in girls/ boys dressing rooms based on anatomical make-up as this remains common practice in most swimming pools in Ireland. Should a child feel uncomfortable with this we will facilitate an alternative changing area and this will be discussed with the relevant parents in advance.

#### 1.5 TEACHING RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY

The teachers deliver a relationships and sexuality programme that has been endorsed by the Department of Education and the HSE. In 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class Sexual Health West deliver a specific programme called Little Wiser which reinforces the programme delivered in school. There is an option for all parents to withdraw their children from the school-based or the Little Wiser programmes. Relevant information will always be shared before these programmes commence.

As previously mentioned, the children are exposed from junior infants upwards to various sexual orientations. This is done when discussing family structures, looking at various sexual orientations through literature, the media or as questions arise. It is done gently in a child appropriate way.

#### 1.6 WHEN HOME VALUES AND SCHOOL ARE IN CONFLICT

The school fully acknowledges that some families can feel uncomfortable when their children are exposed to values in school that may not match those at home. As with religion, the philosophy of KETNS is to teach about topics with a view to creating open-minded and respectful citizens. It is not the school's objective to promote any particular values, other than that of Learn Together to Live Together. Everyone has a right to be themselves as long as they are respectful of others.

See also Anti-Bullying Policy, RSE Policy.