



**Broadmeadow Community
National School,
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Roll Number: 20529J

SEXUAL ORIENTATION POLICY

BROADMEADOW COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL



2023/2024

Principal: Miss J. Robinson

The Principal of Miss Jennifer Robinson is responsible for the implementation of this Sexual Orientation Policy.

Summary

At the centre of the ethos of Broadmeadow CNS is inclusion and equality. In an attempt to ensure that children are made aware of equality issues, Broadmeadow CNS is committed to educating the children about the nine grounds of discrimination on which it is unlawful to discriminate in Ireland i.e. gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

Children become familiar with the language and concept of the nine grounds of discrimination from Junior Infants and continue this throughout their school journey. Throughout the day to day and the curriculum of study our children will focus on a particular aspect of the nine grounds of discrimination and explore it more deeply. It is envisaged that the children will look more closely at 'sexual orientation' in 5th and 6th class, however, it is hoped that the children, from Junior Infants onwards, will develop positive attitudes towards people who are vulnerable to discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

As part of our Anti-Bullying policy, staff in Broadmeadow CNS take a proactive approach to the prevention of bullying, especially identity-based bullying. As identity-based bullying can be the result of a lack of understanding or education about different types of people, it is envisaged that this proactive approach will have a preventative effect on this type of bullying.

"In line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, I asked the working group to put a specific focus on homophobic bullying. Research shows that this is a particularly acute problem for young people who are either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or perceived to be so. It's important that we recognise that bullying behaviour sometimes stems from prejudice, from racism, homophobia or ignorance about a different culture or religion. Addressing such issues can be difficult, challenging and emotive, but prejudiced attitudes must be explored and dealt with. I take the view that a culture that encourages respect, values and opinions, celebrates differences and promotes positive relationships is better for all. All adults, children and young people should understand the role that they can play in preventing and tackling bullying."

(Former Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Ruairí Quinn, Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools 2013).

This document is to inform all members of the school community about the approach the school takes in dealing with sexual orientation. The school has developed an 'Equality Policy' which deals with all nine grounds of discrimination. This document has been prepared to support that policy. As children in the school are all at the junior end of the primary cycle, there will be a need to revise this document to make it more appropriate to older children as the school grows.

Policy Aim

This document aims to:

- Inform the entire school community about the school's approach to sexual orientation.
- Develop in children, from Junior Infants, a positive attitude towards members of the LGBTI community.
- Inform staff of expectations about ensuring that each member of the school community is represented and valued, including members of the LGBTI community.
- Ensure that all members of the school community are fully included and no level of exclusion or discrimination in relation to sexual orientation is founded.

The CNS ethos and Sexual Orientation

"Our mission is to provide a new model of primary education that reflects Ireland in the 21st Century"

Central to the Community National School mission statement is the provision of a high quality education in a setting of diversity and inclusion. In line with our mission statement, Community National Schools recognise and celebrate diversity. Our schools understand the rich educational opportunities in exploring difference. In Community National Schools, we treat each member of the school community equally and with respect. We are committed to living our mission statement by recognising that Irish society has changed greatly in recent years and our schools are reflective of this change.

In relation to our children:

Children in Community National Schools are encouraged to live their lives to the full. We understand that our duty to our children goes beyond their immediate experiences in primary school and that children will carry their experiences in our schools with them for the rest of their lives. We fully comprehend the role the school plays in helping the children in our care with the life-long process of developing a positive self-image. It is extremely important to us that our pupils, if struggling with their sexuality or identity later on in life, will be able to reflect on the positive attitude their primary school had towards the LGBTI community. It is also crucial that pupils who are not/will not be members of the LGBTI community are able to support and understand those who are.

In relation to our parents:

At Broadmeadow CNS we understand that some of the children in our schools may have parents or relatives who are part of the LGBTI community. Our ethos ensures that all present and future members of the school's LGBTI community are treated equally and with respect. Central to our schools' ethos is inclusivity and celebrating diversity. All family types are equally valued and treated with the same respect. We are mindful of the fact that this may be a very sensitive area for some of our families. Teachers are very sensitive when dealing with this topic and before any

discussions begin, the teacher acknowledges that we all have different beliefs and people have the right to express their opinions and beliefs. However, when children express views that contradict the ethos of the school, teachers will say something similar to "What you said might be true in your opinion and you have the right to express it. However, the ethos of this school says that we are all equal and deserve to be treated equally."

In relation to our staff:

We also understand that we have a duty to our staff members to ensure that they are treated equally regardless of their sexuality. Our staffrooms are diverse spaces where we make no assumptions about our staff members. All staff are encouraged to be open with their colleagues about their backgrounds, as diversity in the school community is seen as very valuable. We are also committed to providing CPD to our staff members to educate them about homophobic bullying and ways to prevent it. We also create an environment and atmosphere where no pressure is placed upon any member of staff in relation to their sexual orientation.

The Curriculum and Sexual Orientation

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme supports the work of the school in relation to the nine grounds of discrimination as it aims to:

- Foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others an appreciation of the dignity of every human being.
- Enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity.
- Develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand his/her own sexuality.
- Allow children to feel confident within their own body and express themselves effectively.

Practical Strategies in dealing with sexual orientation

At Broadmeadow CNS we believe that;

"Everyone is an insider, there are no outsiders – whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality."

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu – February 2004)

Strategies used in dealing with sexual orientation will be divided into the following sub-headings: Policy, Curriculum, Safe and Supportive Environment, Community Partnership, Direct Support for Young People, Staff Development and Resources.

These sub-headings were taken from a document produced by 'Belong To' on "Tackling Homophobic & Transphobic Bullying, Whole School Model, Linked with Dept. of Education Action on Bullying, 2013" The sub-headings are discussed in more detail below.

Policy:

- Identity-based bullying with a specific reference to homophobic bullying is highlighted in the school's anti-bullying policy.

Curriculum:

- Teachers are encouraged to include books that depict LGBTI characters for whole class literacy lessons. These are not necessarily used to teach about LGBTI issues but used as any other book used for literacy instruction.
- Through the teaching of GMGY and other school programmes such as stay safe.
- Through stories and discrete activities to discuss similarities, difference and being unique.

Junior and Senior Infants

- Human Environments: Living in the local community/People and other areas or places.
- Myself and my family: My family
- Stories

1st and 2nd Class

- Human Environments: Living in the local community/People and other areas or places.
- Myself and my family: My family
- My family and community families
- Similarities and difference
- Stories

Safe and Supportive Environment:

There is zero tolerance to homophobic language in the school. If a child uses homophobic language, the member of staff will:

- Communicate clearly to the child that language that hurts the feelings of other members of the school community will not be tolerated.
- Ask the child if he/she understands what he/she is saying.
- If the child uses the word 'gay' pejoratively, it will be explained that the word gay has two meanings. It can either mean happy or it can be used to describe when a man loves another man or a woman loves another woman. When we have children in senior classes, our definition will be revised.

Staff members who are approached by a member of the school community who is dissatisfied with such a response will be encouraged to:

- Remind the person of the school's ethos of inclusivity and respect for everyone.

- If they are not satisfied with this, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedures.

All staff are reminded that they must ensure that the language they use around sexual orientation is positive. It is imperative that staff understand that the use of homophobic language amongst staff members will be taken very seriously.

- All staff members have a copy of 'Respect' a publication from the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) to help them create a positive classroom environment towards the LGBTI community.
- Staff members have been given a glossary of terms around sexual orientation to help them discuss this topic appropriately with children (Appendix 1)
- An inclusive environment is created for all members of the school community through the displaying of the 9 grounds of discrimination.

Community Partnership:

- Staff members will be invited to engage in a workshop provided by Belong-To around LGBTI issues.

Direct Support for Young People:

- Although children are taught about 'People I can Trust', staff must remind children that any disclosures made to them about a child's sexuality or otherwise cannot remain confidential. The parents/guardians of a child who makes such a disclosure will be informed.

Staff Development:

- New staff members are informed of policies and practices in relation to all nine grounds of discrimination during induction.
- The contents of this policy is discussed at staff meetings.

Resources:

A number of websites offer helpful suggestions/lesson plans to aid deal with homophobia and LGBTI issues:

- <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/lgbt-sexual-identity-and-orientation.html>
- <https://www.befrienders.org>
- www.tacklehomophobia.com
- www.belongto.org
- www.stonewall.org.uk
- <http://www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/>
- www.glen.ie

Dealing with homophobic bullying:

Homophobic and transphobic bullying has been found to be widespread in Irish schools (Minton, 2013). It affects those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTI), those perceived to be LGBTI, those raised in families headed by LGBTI parents, those with LGBT friends or relatives, and those perceived to be outside the norms that constitute “feminine” and “masculine” behaviour.

A clear correlation between homophobic and transphobic bullying and serious mental health difficulties was found among LGBTI people to the extent that:

- 27% of LGBT people surveyed had self-harmed at least once in their life.
- Over 50% of LGBTI people (under 25) surveyed had seriously thought of ending their lives.
- Just under 36% of LGBTI people (under 25) surveyed had attempted suicide.

(Department of Education 2017)

All cases of homophobic bullying will be dealt with in line with the procedures outlined in the school's 'Anti-Bullying Policy'.

Review and Ratification

This policy has been ratified by;

Chairperson: Brigid Manton

Date: 14/3/23

Principal: J Robinson

Date: 14/3/23