

PREFACE

At the time of compiling this policy, October, 2012, we have children from 34 nationalities in Aston Village Educate Together, Drogheda, Co Louth.

From its start in 2008 with 62 pupils, the school has continued to attract children from all over the world and now has 241 students.

This is due to grow to 300 by September, 2013.

Our challenge is to ensure that all children, siblings, parents, ancillary staff and teachers feel that they are equally valued in our school. They need to feel that their ethnicity and culture are valued and celebrated.

In Ireland today pupils are growing up in a wider multicultural and multiracial society. Drogheda, in particular, has a growing population of people from various countries. There is a large population from the African continent, especially Nigeria (20% in our school).

We have a significant number of students from the Traveller background (8%) and the school is conscious of the need to celebrate and acknowledge their history and culture.

We believe that word of mouth re the inclusive nature of the school is responsible for attracting some families to the Termon Abbey and Aston Village estates.

Racism is still evident in some areas of Irish society. We understand racism to be a particular form of exclusion faced by minority ethnic groups, based on a belief that some races are inherently more superior than others—depending on skin colour, ethnicity, nationality or culture.

Our goal is to ensure that our students do not see race, colour or creed. We will encourage students in Aston Village to celebrate our difference and to imbue the school with a culture of inclusion, respect, tolerance and dignity.

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated following a staff meeting in January, 2012, where all agreed it was necessary to put in place a policy to address the issues of interculturalism, inclusion and anti-racism in our school.

It replaces an interim policy which was put in place at the founding of the school.

Parents will be invited to make submissions on the topic.

Subsequently, the principal and staff of the school will review the plan in June, 2012 and it will be presented to The Parents' Council, the Board of Management and on ratification, will be posted on the school website.

ETHOS

As an Educate Together school, all our interactions are informed by The Learn Together Curriculum.

Aston Village Educate Together Primary School stands against racism and all forms of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, gender or disability.

Please refer to our Equality of Opportunity Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Enrolment Policy, Special Needs Policy.

We recognise that our community is multi-cultural and multi-ethnic and that this challenges teachers to approach things differently to ensure positive outcomes for all our students.

We are actively committed to advancing the objectives and outcomes of the The National Action Plan Against Racism.

We are fully committed to adhering to the tenets of The Equality Acts of 1998 and 2004 and The Equal Status Acts of 2000 and 2004.

We will also refer to 'Children First', the programme of Guidance for Welfare and Protection of Children, 2011.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Aston Village ETNS promotes the principles of equality and respect in all aspects of education and supports the concept of equal access to full education for all our pupils. As we aim to aid the full and harmonious development of each child we feel that this can best be facilitated by adopting an intercultural approach to education, which will span all curricular and organisational areas of school life. We deem this to be of value to all our children, parents, staff and community.

Aston Village ETNS is an equal opportunity employer. It will employ any member of the wider community who is suitably qualified regardless of age, marital status, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or membership of the Traveller community.

Aims

By adopting an intercultural and inclusive approach to teaching and learning we hope to:

- ✓ Develop in each child a respect for self and for others
- ✓ Promote a sense of social responsibility and justice
- ✓ Develop an appreciation of difference
- ✓ Ensure each child feels valued and has a sense of who they are
- ✓ Contribute to students' awareness of their own culture
- ✓ Recognise and value the symbolic role of the presence of mother tongues in the school
- ✓ Provide opportunities for communication regardless of mother tongue and enhance social skills
- ✓ Develop a sense of enquiry in our pupils, teachers and parents
- ✓ Promote critical thinking on equality and cultural issues
- ✓ Introduce the ideas of cultural identities, conflict and conciliation

- ✓ Recognise the value of different cultures in a way that enhances the status of migrant cultures
- ✓ Introduce children to the idea of political issues and their involvement with them
- ✓ Promote a pluralistic approach to the acquisition of knowledge
- ✓ Recognise the potential of the curriculum to develop this area in line with Council of Europe recommendations
- ✓ Encourage students to understand that people have different skin tone, hair, diet (International Food Fair), dress, musical taste (Music Festivals), religious beliefs (festivals throughout the school year), artistic taste, customs etc. and to ensure that each child feels that all of these are included for discussion/study whenever possible
- ✓ to engage with the Local Authorities in supporting their projects (Yellow Flag, Louth Leader Partnership, Drogheda Unit for Social Inclusion, Darver Project, Louth Traveller Group etc.)
- ✓ to acknowledge the achievements of other peoples in art, music, science, technology, sport, literature etc, etc.
- ✓ Learn about all religions of the world and celebrate festivals with the students of same
- ✓ Understand that some people have no particular religious beliefs and consequently to introduce the concepts of atheism and agnosticism
- ✓ to encourage the students in Aston Village to see themselves as the greatest resource in creating an inclusive atmosphere

1. Enrolment

Our Enrolment Policy is on the school website and is now in line with the Education Act (1998). Aston Village has a first-come/first served policy. We welcome all pupils to enrol in our school for as long as space allows. No child will be denied access because of a disability**, race, cultural background, first language, disadvantage, country of origin, ethnicity, gender or religious belief.

We hope to have copies of our Enrolment Policy in more languages (timescale-end of 2012).

At the time of writing, Aston Village is inviting enrolments for all classes.

**Children with a disability will be accepted when the school feels it has the necessary resources to ensure that the child is adequately catered for.

2. Anti-Racism Charter

The staff and pupils of Aston Village ETNS will draw up an Anti-Racism Charter at the start of each new school year. This ensures it is appropriate to each class level and is understood by all children. It states the rights of each child at school/in the classroom. When it is drawn up,

each child signs it. Any breach of this charter will result in a meeting with the principal followed by discussion at circle time.

3. **Dealing with Racist Incidents** (c/f Positive Behaviour Policy/Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Critical Incident Policy)

Aston Village ETNS promotes the principles of equality and respect in all aspects of education and supports the concept of equal access to full education for all our pupils. Any breach of this ethos is in fact a breach of school rules as laid out in the Code of Behaviour. Name calling of any description is not tolerated.

For the purpose of this policy, the term '*racism*' is used to describe any form of discrimination against a person in the school on the grounds of their cultural background, skin colour or religious belief. It portrays a belief that some people are inferior because they belong to a certain ethnic, racial or cultural group. This belief leads to attitudes of prejudice and discriminatory actions. It reinforces relationships of unequal power.

A '*racist incident*' is defined as an incident where verbal or physical aggression targets a victim on the basis of his/her colour, religion, ethnicity, including membership of the Traveller community. Where the incident is felt by the victim to be racist it may be defined as a racist incident.

In dealing with racist incidents the follow procedure will be adhered to:

- The child who reports the incident will be listened to
- The perpetrator will be asked to recount his/her version of the story
- If necessary, witnesses will be questioned
- The perpetrator will be talked to by both the class teacher/teacher on yard supervision to ensure he/she understands why the behaviour is unacceptable, to ensure he/she understands how this incident affects the victim, to ensure he/she is given the opportunity to reflect on the incident and is given a chance to suggest a way of resolving the conflict
- Any of the sanctions as laid out in the PBP can be used e.g. writing an apology and having it signed by parents, writing to explain why this behaviour is unacceptable. As such an incident

- is a breach of the Charter Against Racism, it may be discussed at circle time and will result in the perpetrator facing sanctions.
- The victim will be talked to by the class teacher to ensure the victim understands that the behaviour is unacceptable, is not tolerated by the school and that measures must be taken to make amends.
 - The class teacher will record any such instances in a class file
 - If a child is reported to have been involved in two racist incidents the principal will be informed and will reprimand the child. If a child is reported to be involved in any subsequent racist incidents, the parents of this child will be invited into the school and the matter will be discussed. The teacher will record this information in the child's file. These files are stored in a locked drawer in the office and the principal alone having access to such files. Parents, through written request may also have access to these files, although the information stored therein is relayed to each parent at the annual parent teacher meeting.

This procedure mirrors the breach of any school rules as laid out in the Positive Behaviour Policy. This PBP has been ratified by the BOM of Aston Village ETNS and has been signed by each parent at enrolment.

It is hoped that racist incidents will be reduced by reinforcing the following measures:

- Ensuring each child has signed the Charter against Racism at the beginning of each school year (in this case, January, 2012).
- Teachers will use the Learn Together Curriculum as a main resource
- Correct terms for naming people from various cultural backgrounds will be modelled by all staff, will be used consistently when discussing such issues and will be corrected in children who fail to use such terms.
- This terminology will be brought to parents' attention at September induction meeting each year.
- Oral language lessons will focus on such themes as feelings, difference and describing people.
- SPHE will focus on citizenship, self-esteem and respect. Relevant material will be made available to parents
- Circle time is our positive approach to behaviour in the school. Children are encouraged to talk about any incidences which threaten their sense of security.
- Each teacher allows time for Circle Time each week
- The principal, when administrative and if time allows, will take each class weekly for Circle Time

- The principal covers for those who have been on yard duty. During this time he will use the opportunity to reaffirm the good behaviour and positive interactions of the students.
- Language: skin colour need not be a contentious issue and should be openly discussed: in Aston Village ETNS, black, brown, light brown and white are spoken of as the skin tones of our students and teachers: special skin tone pencils have been purchased so that while drawing themselves or others, they can portray these tones.

5. Home-School Links/Parental Involvement:

It is appreciated that healthy home-school links are central to the success of this intercultural policy, as with all policies. To enhance home-school links this school makes all parents feel equally welcome.

- Aston Village prides itself on the excellent relationship it has built up with the parent body
- We have a very busy Parents' Council led by Sharon Adams. The principal meets regularly to plan and discuss topics.
- Parents know that, within reason, they can avail of school facilities and resources to further our endeavours in AVET.
- All parents can approach the class teacher with regard to any concerns they have.
- Parents are requested to make an appointment to facilitate an adequate discussion of the concern.
- The notice board inside the front door has a welcome note in the mother tongue of all the pupils in our school. This continues to grow.

Each staff member has attended 2 sessions organised by Paula Madden of The Yellow Flag Programme. The focus of the course was to alert teachers to cultural differences in various ethnic groups particularly in the area of travellers. This is central to our Children First Child Protection Guidelines.

The Parents Association have also expressed an interest in helping in this area through the organisation of parenting courses.

The Traveller Support Group have addressed all Senior classes and teachers.

The journalist from Newstalk, Dil Wickremasinghe came to give a talk on how immigrants settle in Ireland and the supports they require.

It is hoped to provide more of these opportunities for parents.

It has come to the attention of the principal that not all parents understand the notices that are sent home to parents. To deal with the problem, the following measures are now being taken:

- A standard procedure letter with symbols will be issued to indicate days off.
- All standard letters will be translated into Polish and Russian by the parents who have expressed a willingness to do so (Kasia)

Each class teacher and principal will meet with international parents at the parent teacher meeting to ensure the parents understand the role of the school, the expectations of the school and the expected role of the parents. The principal will bring the important points of this to the attention of parents at enrolment .

The principal has a file of contact names for various support groups e.g. Language teachers, Parents Association etc. which may be useful to international parents. It will be given to parents who seek such information.

The staff have brought to the attention of the Parents' Association the growing number of international parents. They are currently offering support to the PA for the organisation of social functions to encourage international parents to assimilate into Irish society. The association has also plans to meet each Wednesday morning to assist any parents who wish to converse in English and to help them to understand what is going on in school. Crèche facilities will be available thanks to Carolyn Delaney. It is hoped that this will encourage better links between all parents. The PA has also highlighted an interest in having a representative from the International community to join the committee. The school sees this as a very positive step and encourages the move.

To encourage more parents to become involved in the school curriculum the following activities have become our policy:

- An annual school concert in June
- Plays performed by students-parents invited
- School discos-parents supervising
- Samba Mammies-activity/music for all parents
- Catholic Religion Classes-
- An annual Christmas concert in December which has an intercultural theme. Songs from different cultures are presented by the children. This event is a particularly strong link between the home and the school. This is a non-threatening way to involve parents in school activities
- In September of each year (January, this year), all parents are invited to present a cultural item to a class (usually the

class of their child). This can range from telling a story, reading a poem, singing a song, allowing children to sample some food, showing a skill, displaying clothes etc. It has proved very successful in some classes already and the school will keep a database of the skills displayed by each parent for further reference should the need arise.

- The parents of students will be invited into the school for activities/National events (Food Day), Hat Parade (recycled stuff), sports day etc.
- Chinese New Year guest speaker

In drawing up school policies, Aston Village ETNS will seek contributions from all parents where appropriate and will seek contributions from the international community where necessary. We now deem it necessary to consider the intercultural implications of all our policies, this will not be effective without the international parents views and suggestions. When policies are brought to completion, parents will be notified at the beginning of each school term and invited to view the policy in the principal's office when an appointment is made. International parents are welcome to bring an interpreter. It is also hoped that these policies will be translated, and the translation of each is written into the school's five year development plan.

6. Language Acquisition:

When international parents enrol their child in the school, details will be taken of the mother tongue of the child.

- Children should continue to use the mother tongue at home
- Children will be given a settling in period before they are requested to participate in all oral language activities in the class.
- Children of the same mother tongue are free to converse in this language during the school day
- Children will be encouraged to teach the class some basic words from their native language (e.g. hello, thank you, please, goodbye). This will only be requested when the teacher deems the child ready.
- Irish may not be taught to the international child for their initial settling in period
- English classes will be given where possible by the Learning Support/Resource and EAL teachers where time allows. The Infant teachers of this school and the principal have also agreed to aid with language activities for international children.

- As this school deems it crucial that the child maintains a link between their mother tongue/culture in the school environment every effort will be made to encourage the child and parents to share this with us as a school community

All world festivals as relevant to our pupil population will be celebrated by the school community. Teachers in Aston Village have already shown a great willingness to find out information and deliver quality lessons on these issues.

Guest speakers will be invited into the school where possible.

This is of equal importance to the international community and to the indigenous Irish community.

7. Homework:

International children will be given homework suitable to their needs. They may be given handwriting practice (where they have learnt a different script), revision of basic sight words, to draw a picture instead of a writing activity. As much support as possible will be sought from the parents to facilitate maximum learning of the child. Where possible parents will be encouraged to look at the child's school books and teach elements of different subjects in the mother tongue.

Once the international children have attained a proficient level of English, they will be requested to attempt the homework as set out for that particular class.

Where the language teacher/learning support/resource teacher give homework this will be communicated to the class teacher and will take priority over the homework as assigned by the class teacher. The class teacher will adjust homework accordingly.

8. Attendance:

The attendance issues as presented in the Education Welfare Act (2000) will be brought to the attention of enrolling international parents and will be reinforced by the principal. The procedure for dealing with absenteeism and our strategies for encouraging attendance are laid out in our Attendance Policy (revised January, 2012).

9. Uniform:

As in all Educate Together Schools, we do not have a uniform policy. If required the school will help children who wish to get the school tracksuit and submissions may be made to find an organisation that will help with

the cost of the uniform for disadvantaged children in the school. If a parent wishes their child to wear a cultural garment with the school tracksuit or instead of the school tracksuit, the BOM will make best efforts to accommodate this wish.

Girls/boys who wish to cover their hair for religious/cultural reasons may do so.

A student may not cover his/her face as this will impinge on the ability of teachers to interact suitably in a primary school setting with their students.

10. School Booklet/Information Booklet:

Our school booklet is issued to all parents at the start of each school year, or at enrolment. It is written in English. It is hoped that the booklet will also be translated into the mother tongue of each international child sometime in the future. We consider the booklet an essential reference book for parents as it contains:

- Opening/closing times
- Information on Educate Together
- Subjects taught and the implications of the Revised Curriculum as it comes on stream
- After-school religion classes
- Positive Behaviour Policy, Anti-Racism Charter, Anti-Bullying Policy
- Homework Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Administration of Medicine/First Aid/Accident and Emergency Policy
- Healthy Lunch Policy
- Attendance Policy
- School Calendar
- List of school staff
- Extra-curricular activities, when available
- Information on how parents can best help their child with educational matters
- Parent-Teacher Meetings
- Complaints Procedure
- Learn Together Curriculum information

This booklet is revised on an annual basis, with recommendations from the Parents' Association.

11. Induction of New Pupils:

It is the policy of Aston Village ETNS to place new pupils in age appropriate classes, regardless of e.g. linguistic ability in English. As an intercultural ethos governs this school, with intercultural aspects to the curriculum at each class level, the class teacher will prepare the pupils of the class receiving the new pupil in the 'usual' way:

- Buddy system
- Circle time focused on feeling new, change, etc.
- A specific request for each child to make an effort to help the new child settle in

Whenever possible the parents and child will be invited into the school at the end of a school day prior to the child starting to meet with the class teacher. The class teacher and the principal will show the new child various 'points of interest' in the classroom/school. We hope this will alleviate some of the anxiety felt by both the parents and the pupil. Parents will also be asked if the child knows anybody in the school. If they already know a child in the class, the new child will be put sitting beside him/her for the initial induction period. If the known child is in a different class, every effort will be made for the new child to meet his/her friend regularly during the school day.

It is also essential that the class teacher is given support when a non-English speaking child joins the class. The EAL teacher, learning support teacher, resource teacher, infant teacher and principal have expressed interest in helping out any such class teacher.

12. Resources:

As part of our intercultural policy, textbooks are selected with due consideration to the intercultural component.

Intercultural Infant toys consist of dolls of different skin colour, eating utensils from a variety of countries (e.g. chopsticks, knives and forks, etc.), items in the toy shop which are reflective of the intercultural theme (e.g. couscous boxes, rice packets, pasta wrappers, etc.)

Posters and charts have where possible an intercultural theme.

Special pencil sets which contain all skin colours.

The school has also purchased a large number of pictures for the school corridors which show images of various countries, peoples, etc.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the library stock. Now that we have a library, we will decorate it suitably to reflect our pupils' nationalities. The school also orders from the internet.

The internet is used as a regular class resource.

Children from the international community are encouraged to check out websites in their mother tongue. See also internet policy for details on safety, etc.

Google Earth is a useful tool to help new children settle in.

13. Staff Development:

We are lucky in Aston Village in having teachers with a wide variety of experiences in dealing with children from different countries and backgrounds. Some have trained in England, others have worked abroad and others have had experience in schools of different patronage.

All teachers regularly discuss issues on intercultural education, what it means and its implications for a school and a classroom. The BOM will organise and fund in-service, when possible. As new teachers join the school, the induction process includes information on the intercultural aspects of school life.

The school has also a number of resources for teacher information which is stored in the staff room. Teachers who prepare specific intercultural work-cards are requested to make additional copies, to place them in the 'New Intercultural Material' folder in the staffroom filing cabinet.

14. Special Needs:

The staff of Aston Village Educate Together NS appreciate the culture shock that international children face and the challenge of assimilation into the Irish Educational System. It is further acknowledged that children who flee from their home country seeking asylum are dealing with added trauma. International children displaying emotional or behavioural problems (and have a poor level of competence in oral English) will be encouraged to work with the resource/learning support teachers until settled in.

Where a psychological assessment is deemed necessary the procedure as laid out in the Special Needs/Learning Support Policy will be followed.

Teachers will not ask parents or children their reason for leaving the homeland. It is hoped that through strong home-school relations, parents may trust staff members with such information when they are comfortable.

Such information will be treated in confidence and relayed only to staff members concerned with the child (e.g. class teacher, learning support teacher).

15. Curriculum:

All children have access to all areas of the curriculum. Non-English speaking children may be exempt from Irish during an induction period. The principal will continue to follow the DES guidelines as laid down re the exemption from learning Irish as a language. However, all children will be involved in celebrating/being involved in all other aspects of Irish culture-dance, song, folklore etc.

No child will be eliminated from activities, competitions or projects due to their race or religious belief. However, in some cases teachers will discuss this with parents.

In Aston Village, there have been some incidences when children have been withdrawn from events/activities for personal/religious reasons. Usually, the teacher or principal can explain what the lesson entails and assuage any fears or misgivings.

It is also the policy of this school to teach about other world religions, and using the children and parents from other religious backgrounds as a resource. This is deemed appropriate for all children.

The Learn Together Curriculum strand 'Belief Systems' is most appropriate for ensuring that children from different religions feel included and that their beliefs are valued.

The staff is currently action planning around the two following areas:

- IEPs for International Children to document their needs and their progress
- Transition to Post Primary for our first graduates

CHOICE OF READING SCHEMES, BOOKS AND OTHER LITERARY RESOURCES

Staff will choose and use resources:

1. which portray a world view as seen from different cultural perspectives and thereby communicate how it feels to be of another ethnic or cultural group.
2. which are factually accurate and use up-to-date text, illustrations and maps.

3. which do not:
 - stereotype individuals or groups.
 - equate the white person with "civilisation".
4. which show the achievements and attributes of different societies, both past and present, e.g.:The Egyptians, The Greeks, The Romans, The Vikings, The Aborigines, Chinese and Islamic science, African civilisations before colonisation and the benefits of the extended family system etc.
5. which show children of different ethnic groups involved in the activities described, e.g., physics, design, music, dance, mathematics.
6. which positively and realistically portray children from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups and class backgrounds.
7. in which children from ethnic minority groups can find characters which enhance their self esteem, where ethnic minority characters have important roles and adults hold positions of authority.
8. which show ethnic minority characters not having to justify their colour by being exceptionally virtuous or brave etc.
9. which have illustrations that avoid caricature.
10. which accurately reflect the population of Ireland today. Are the representatives from the ethnic minorities in the text or illustrations merely token?
11. which use dialect appropriately and not to ridicule.
12. which use a range of folk tales from different oral or cultural traditions.
13. which use stories or poems written by children from different cultures.

LEARN TOGETHER PROGRAMME:

Through the 4 strands of The Learn Together Programme, teachers can ensure that their students receive a rounded, holistic view of their world.

A teacher will lead the planning, once appointed to the post.

VISUAL ARTS:

In Design, especially Textiles, Ceramics and Art, we work towards instilling in the pupils an appreciation and understanding of art, craft and designs from other cultures as well as those from Western-European culture.

Over the last 3 years in Aston Village, we have seen excellent examples of folk art-masks, hats, murals etc.

DRAMA:

Occasionally in drama, work is deliberately aimed at discussion and reflection on discrimination and racism. Children are encouraged to understand the feelings of minority groups. A wide range of integrated drama and music is used in different classes.

Circle time offers the opportunity for role play.

ENGLISH:

Wherever possible, we would endeavour to draw attention to the multiethnic origins of the English language. We look at how contemporary language is influenced by other cultures.

When teaching literature one can explore a wide range of works from Afro-Caribbean, Asian and black American authors. There are many fine examples of literature written as a result of discrimination. A wide range of stories and poems are used and their origins are explored.

Historical figures are used to highlight discrimination of all kinds-among the favourites in Aston Village to date we can count:

Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Florence Nightingale, our president, Michael D,

GEOGRAPHY:

When dealing with issues of the third world and development, pupils have access to a wide range of materials and resources, the internet being the most widely used.

We have recently got involved in Plan Ireland.

We have fund-raised for Haiti, Turkey etc.

Teachers regularly focus on individual countries to study maps, people, language, traditions, music , food etc.

MATHEMATICS:

Mathematics taught at primary schools is derived from cultures other than those of Western Europe. Many people are unaware of the origins of modern mathematics.

Countries today which are in economic decline such as Greece and Egypt should be celebrated for their contributions to our society today in many areas: maths, science, astronomy, language, drama etc.

GAEILGE:

Children from other countries have embraced the learning of Irish.

As mentioned above, new children to Ireland and Aston Village will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

All children will be involved in non-language activities which deal with the history, culture and traditions of the host country.

MUSIC:

The wealth of 'World Music' available today as heard in recordings, live performances and from the media, gives the teacher many examples to use as a basis for Listening and Responding, Performing and Composing. It is hoped that pupils can appreciate and recognise what has been and what can be achieved by

integrating the music from different cultures as heard in the many diverse styles of music today. There are many fine examples of music composed as a result of discrimination.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

Dance is a good vehicle by which one can explore anti-racist topics and various forms of discrimination. The children often work on themes and are free to explore and develop their own ideas. The growing number of contemporary sportsmen and women from different ethnic groups achieving success in a variety of sports helps to present a positive image of the different cultures. The camaraderie and equality of sport at all levels is also used to further enhance the sense of equality of different races, ethnic groups and cultures.

The upcoming Olympic Games in London will provide a great opportunity to affirm and recognise the great sporting achievements of athletes from all parts of the world.

We are involved in 'Give Racism the Red Card'.

SCIENCE:

Children should know that scientific success has been achieved by people from all countries and ethnic backgrounds.

We need to draw attention to ways in which scientific/economic evidence can be misused to assert a point of view, e.g. the world food supply and causes of pollution. The Fair Trade movement can be highlighted.

EDUCATE TOGETHER MOVEMENT:

Our patron body is committed to supporting each school in its efforts to provide a caring, inclusive environment for the students and staff.

YELLOW FLAG PROGRAMME:

Aston Village ETNS was the second Primary school to be awarded the Yellow Flag.

An Introduction to our School

Guided by our motto, "Learn together to live together", we were delighted with the opportunity to participate in the Yellow Flag Programme to help us as a school community to embrace our diversity, to celebrate our difference and to promote equality in all aspects of school life.

We enclose in this section a recent interview from a local newspaper which put our Principal John “under the spotlight” and our school flyer which we circulated to all homes in the immediate locality.

Anti-Racism Training

On September 13th 2010, Paula Madden YF Co-ordinator with the ITM, introduced the whole staff to the Yellow Flag Programme and outlined the steps we would undertake as a community to support interculturalism and inclusion.

On September 30th, the staff was joined by parents and management representatives to participate in the first session of Anti-Racism and Intercultural Awareness Training, facilitated by Paula and Dil Wickremasinghe. This session provided a safe space for discussion and reflection on issues around interculturalism.

This training has enabled us as staff and parents to understand the impact of prejudice and discrimination on children and their families, to understand the importance of promoting equality and diversity in our school and to assist us in our goal to develop inclusive policies and practices. We hope to avail of further training in the future.

We enclose in this section notes from our training sessions and feedback from participants following the introductory session.

Beyond the school walls: engaging with the community

The Yellow Flag Programme has created a stimulus for us as a school community to reach out to the wider community in our locality and beyond.

We have connected with our local Traveller representatives in Louth Rosemarie and Bernard who will be supporting our curricular work by making a presentation about Traveller culture to the children in June.

We are also forging links with other relevant individuals and organisations to support our initiatives to promote interculturalism and anti-racism, such as

- Challenge of Change officer Katerina Skrebska of the Peace III Southern Partnership;
- Valerie Atherton of Drogheda Borough Council, who facilitated the participation of some of our African girls in a Soccer Sisters training camp;
- Local Gaelic Football Club, Newtown Blues where middle and senior classes have commenced Gaelic training on Fridays
- representatives of the Muslim community who addressed classes during Eid-il-Fitr;
- local and national politicians who have visited our school to learn more about our Yellow Flag work, such as Ged Nash TD, Fergus O'Dowd, TD and Ruairi Quinn, now Minister for Education;
- national organisations such as the Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland and children's charity Plan Ireland – our Diversity Committee member Sharon, aged 9, features in their "Because I am a Girl" radio campaign to raise awareness of children poverty and promote children's rights;

- we have also invited local Church of Ireland school St. Peter's NS, Drogheda to participate in our Basketball Blitz which was a resounding success!

Our International Food Fair, kindly supported by Louth Leader Partnership, was another key intercultural event in our plan to forge links with the community, drawing big numbers to sample tasty fare from across the world!

St. Patrick's Day Parade – This was a huge success with 250 students, parents and teachers carrying Yellow Flag balloons and bunting as they marched in the parade behind Kieran Gallagher and his Samba band.

A leaflet drop in local estates Aston Village, Termon Abbey and Newtown Meadows to promote the school in the local community was very successful as was the open day which attracted very positive feedback from prospective parents, their children and other visitors. An advertisement was taken out in a local paper to advertise the school to our wider catchment area.

We enclose sample photos from our Basketball Blitz and St. Patrick's Day Parade, one of Sharon and Maria in the recording studios working on the Plan Ireland ad and a poem from the local paper which celebrates the diversity at our school.

The Intercultural Review

During this step of the Yellow Flag Programme of work, we sought to identify the intercultural and diversity issues that exist in the school.

An audit of current provision and practice was carried out in October using 2 questionnaires devised by John, Dermot and student representatives including Diversity Committee and Student's Council members in consultation with their peers.

These questionnaires reviewed the school's inclusivity in terms of ethos, teaching and learning, home/school/community links and professional development.

One questionnaire was given to children and another to parents. A total of 228 questionnaires were sent home to adults and an impressive 80% responded.

This review yielded rich information which was analysed by the Committee during January and February and which we have summarised and include here as feedback from parents and children. We also enclose copies of both questionnaires, which have also been forwarded to ET Head Office for use as a resource in other schools.

The Diversity Committee used this formal information gathering and more informal methods such as staff meetings, coffee mornings and chats with parents and other stakeholders to inform our action plan.

The Action Plan

The Action Plan was formulated after considering the detailed findings of the intercultural review.

It sets out what we would like to achieve as a result of our involvement in the Yellow Flag Programme and sets targets to improve our whole-school environment, identifying when we hope to achieve these goals and who will be responsible for ensuring that they are met.

While many of our targets have now been achieved, they will become annual targets, e.g. the celebration of important religious and cultural days. Some actions are more appropriately included in our long-term planning for inter-culturalism, e.g. building relationships with local, regional and national groups working around diversity, developing awareness of Traveller culture.

Our action plan was endorsed by the Board of Management and widely circulated.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Information Dissemination

Keeping track of the work done on the eight steps has been valuable in ensuring that our engagement with the programme is dynamic and ongoing.

Our Yellow Flag folder charts our successes and our ongoing targets with photocopies of training materials, newspaper cuttings, letters, photographs, questionnaires, findings, drawings, draft policy etc.

The Yellow Flag Notice-board is prominently located in the main corridor and is used to record work done, to highlight intercultural issues and to disseminate relevant information such as key dates in our calendar, e.g. Martin Luther King Day, Traveller pride Week, Eid-il-Fitr etc.

Our website astonvillageetns.com displays photos of some of our intercultural events and curricular work around diversity and anti-racism, including the 3rd-4th class trip to the local library to see their Yellow Flag and Show Racism the Red Card art on display.

We also include here a copy of the Educate Together newsletter which published John's article about the Yellow Flag Programme to publicise our work more widely to our community of ET schools all over the country.

In addition we have used posters at all entrances/exits to highlight key Yellow Flag messages, both for children and adults.

Curriculum Work

Given the diversity of our school community and our ethos as an Educate Together school, intercultural and development education is inherently embedded in both our formal curricular planning and in the

hidden curriculum that creates the characteristic spirit of our school, e.g. adults modelling good practice for children.

We recognise that the work of facilitating the development of intercultural competence requires an ongoing process building understanding, skills and values by stages, unconfined to one particular subject area but integrated with all subjects and with the general life of the school.

Our participation in the Yellow Flag Programme has given an added impetus to our intercultural and development education across the curriculum with work stimulated by topics such as key religious festivals like Eid, Divali and Easter, cultural celebrations like Chinese New Year, national holidays like Martin Luther King Junior Day and focusing on ethnic and cultural diversity, human rights and equality issues arising from national initiatives to raise awareness, such as Traveller Pride Week and Anti-Racism Week.

Staff have been very supportive of including intercultural education in all areas of school planning providing many opportunities for children to appreciate the richness and diversity of our school community and to recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination. We have assembled a Yellow Flag box of resources in the staffroom to support each other in our planning and we hope that our class and corridor displays of art and other work reflect and show pride in the language, ethnic and cultural diversity that characterises our school.

We include here some samples of curriculum work, such as an intercultural portfolio from Elaine's 1st-2nd Class, Divali artwork from Sandra's 4th-5th, artwork on identity from Paul's 1st class and more!

The Diversity Code and Anti-Racism Policy

The final step in the Yellow Flag Programme is the production of the Diversity Code and Anti-Racism Policy. Even though it implies a conclusion, it represents in many ways taking yet another step – emboldened by our Yellow Flag experiences we endeavour to apply on a day-to-day basis what we have learned so that we continue to move as a school community toward real and meaningful inclusivity and interculturalism.

Since our participation with the Yellow Flag Programme began last September, children have grappled with mottos, slogans, images and ideas in their exploration of the issues involved, through class-work, circle-time, student council meetings, committee meetings etc. We enclose our Diversity Code entitled “Our Difference is our Strength”.

Staff members have also collaborated in our exploration of the issues identified during the intercultural review, training, feedback sessions

and staff meetings to feed into our draft policy to support interculturalism and inclusion and prevent racism.

Our Principal John took the lead in this process and with link-teacher Dermot has drafted a document which pulls together our discussions and deliberations. This document will be presented to staff and the Diversity Committee at our next meeting for final agreement before presentation to the Board of Management for ratification. It will then be publicised throughout the school, in our newsletter and on our website. We also enclose here our draft policy and our school's Yellow Flag anthem The Hammer Song, which we sing at our assemblies and celebrations.

Our Difference is our Strength

I have the right to be welcomed

So I will welcome you;

I have the right to be heard

So I will listen too;

I have the right to my beliefs

So I will learn about you;

I have the right to be treated fairly

I will treat you fairly too;

I have the right to be included

I'll make sure that you are too;

I'm glad that we are different

I'm me and you are you!

8 Steps towards Yellow Flag

1. Anti-Racism training
2. Set up Diversity Committee
3. Beyond school walls – engaging with community
4. Intercultural Review
5. Action Plan
6. Monitoring, evaluation & information dissemination
7. Curriculum work
8. Anti-Racism Policy & Diversity Code

Success Criteria

We will deem this policy successful if the following criteria are fulfilled:

- Reduction in the number of racist incidences as noted collectively by the staff
- An improvement in school attendance in Traveller and international children as identified at staff meeting
- An increase in the numbers of parents (particularly Traveller and international parents) attending parent teacher meetings/ parent association meetings/ school meetings
- An increased instance of varied language usage within the school: posters, labels, notices, songs, poems, conversations in languages other than English.
- A sense that all children continue to feel valued in Aston Village ETNS

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the overall responsibility of the principal to ensure that teachers are reminded of the decisions agreed upon as laid out in this policy at regular staff meetings.

Each class teacher will have specific duties for the implementation of these decisions in his/her classroom.

The vice-principal will take responsibility for translating policies as requested by parents.

Sharon Adams of the Parents' Association will ensure that all parents are made aware of the role and function of the association and will employ strategies to ensure maximum participation, contribution and attendance at such meetings.

Timeframe for Implementation

The decisions as laid out in this policy take effect from 1 February, 2012.

All relevant items will be adapted before 30 April, 2012.

All relevant documents will be translated before 31st December, 2012 subject to translators being available

All teachers will plan accordingly for the remainder of the school year 2011-2012 taking account of the decisions laid out in this policy.

Timeframe for Review

This policy and all related policies will be reviewed at a SDP Day during the school year 2011-2012. The school will request a planning day for the second or third term to allow adequate time to implement the new decisions.

This policy may also need to be reviewed under the following circumstances:

- If the policy is deemed not to be suitable for our needs.
- If the BOM refuse to ratify the policy.
- At the request of International parents / Parents' Association
- If the DES makes extra funding available for e.g. supplementary teachers for language, bi-lingual classroom assistants, bilingual books, interpreters, translators.

Responsibility for Review

The principal teacher will ensure each staff member has a copy of the policy prior to the planning day.

Each teacher will make a verbal report on the policy as a review of this policy. They will also sign off to say that they have read and accepted it.

The Parents' Association will be requested to make recommendations at their first meeting in February, 2012.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be presented to the BOM of Aston Village ETNS in November, 2012.

It will be made available to the Parents' Association on ratification and put on the school website www.astonvillageetns.com .

