



St. Michael's School

Equal Opportunities, Equality & Inclusion Policy

Comprehensively Updated: **May 2026** | Next Review: May 2028

Updated to reflect the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018, Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, UNCRPD, LAOS 2022, disability rights, gender identity, inclusion, anti-discrimination procedures, accessibility, and dignity frameworks

Introductory Statement

St. Michael's School is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all pupils, staff, parents/guardians, and members of the wider school community. This policy has been comprehensively updated to reflect current equality legislation, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) 2022, and best practice in inclusion, accessibility, and dignity.

This policy applies to all members of the school community — pupils, staff, parents/guardians, visitors, volunteers, contractors, and Board of Management members. It covers all aspects of school life including enrolment, curriculum access, assessment, extracurricular activities, employment, and the physical environment.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment, Bi Cinealta Policy, Code of Behaviour, Confidentiality Policy, Admissions Policy and Data Protection/GDPR Policy.

Rationale

Every member of our school community has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. As a school serving pupils with a range of learning, communication, and support needs, St. Michael's School has a particular responsibility to ensure that equality, accessibility, and inclusion are actively promoted.

Equality does not mean treating everyone the same. It means ensuring that every person has equitable access to opportunities, resources, and support, with reasonable accommodations made to meet individual needs.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Michael's School is a welcoming and inclusive community grounded in Gospel values. We believe in the inherent dignity and worth of every person. Our commitment to equality and inclusion is an expression of these values — and is reinforced by our obligations under Irish and European equality law and the UNCRPD.

Aims

- To promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all members of the school community
- To prevent and address discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in all their forms
- To ensure the full inclusion and participation of all pupils in the life of the school, regardless of disability, special educational need, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, family status, or any other protected ground
- To embed accessibility as a core principle across all aspects of school life — physical, curricular, communicative, and social
- To promote a culture of dignity, respect, and belonging for every member of the school community
- To instil a sense of pride in our own culture whilst simultaneously cultivating an understanding of the value of cultural diversity.
- To align with the obligations of the UNCRPD, particularly Article 24 (inclusive education) and Article 5 (equality and non-discrimination)

Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and guidance:

Legislation / Framework	Relevance to this Policy
Equal Status Acts 2000–2018	Prohibits discrimination in the provision of services (including education) on nine grounds: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community
Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015	Prohibits discrimination in employment on the same nine grounds; covers recruitment, pay, training, promotion, and conditions of employment
Education Act 1998	Establishes the right of all children to an education; obliges schools to promote equality of access and participation
EPSEN Act 2004	Establishes the right of children with SEN to an inclusive education
Disability Act 2005	Requires public bodies to ensure that their services are accessible to people with disabilities
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	International treaty ratified by Ireland; Article 24 requires inclusive education; Article 5 requires equality and non-discrimination
Children First Act 2015	Child welfare and protection obligations relevant to all equality grounds
Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) 2022	Quality framework requiring schools to demonstrate inclusive practice, equity, and pupil wellbeing
Gender Recognition Act 2015	Legal recognition of a person's preferred gender; implications for school records, facilities, and communication

Protected Grounds

Under the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018, discrimination is prohibited on the following nine grounds:

Ground	Definition
Gender	A person's gender, including gender identity and gender expression
Civil Status	Single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, or in a civil partnership
Family Status	Being a parent or person in loco parentis of a person under 18, or a resident primary carer of a person with a disability
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual orientation

Religion	Religious belief, background, or outlook, including having no religious belief
Age	Age (subject to certain exceptions in education)
Disability	The presence of a physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive, or emotional difference that affects participation
Race	Race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origin
Traveller Community	Membership of the Irish Traveller community

St. Michael's School is also committed to preventing discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression, recognising the particular vulnerability of transgender and gender-diverse young people.

Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

St. Michael's School is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all pupils, staff, parents and visitors are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Recognising the profile of St. Michael's School as a special school for pupils with Mild General Learning Disability and associated needs, accessibility includes physical, sensory, communication, emotional and curriculum access. The school will continue to develop universal and individualised supports to maximise participation, wellbeing and learning.

The school will endeavour to:

- promote equality of opportunity for all;
- prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- provide reasonable accommodations for pupils and staff with disabilities, within available resources and legislative requirements;
- support the inclusion and participation of all pupils in school life;
- foster respect for diversity, including differences in ability, culture, religion, family background and identity;
- ensure school procedures are implemented fairly and consistently;
- respond appropriately to concerns relating to equality, inclusion or discrimination through the relevant school procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Management	Ratifies and reviews this policy; ensures the school meets its equality and inclusion obligations; considers equality implications in all governance decisions
Principal	Implements this policy; responds to complaints; promotes equality culture; leads staff CPD on equality and inclusion; monitors accessibility; reports to BoM
Teaching Staff	Promote equality and inclusion in all classroom practice; use accessible and differentiated teaching approaches; challenge discrimination and harassment; report concerns to Principal

SNAs	Support inclusion of all pupils; treat every pupil with dignity and respect; report concerns to class teacher or Principal
All Staff	Model respectful and inclusive behaviour at all times; challenge discrimination; engage in equality and inclusion professional learning opportunities; report concerns
Parents/Guardians	Support the school's equality and inclusion ethos; treat all members of the school community with respect; report concerns to the Principal
Pupils	Treat all classmates, staff, and members of the school community with respect and dignity; report incidents of discrimination or harassment to a trusted adult

Monitoring and Review

The school will monitor the implementation of this policy on an ongoing basis. This will include:

- The Principal will report anonymised equality-related trends, where relevant, to the Board as part of policy review processes
- Pupil voice mechanisms to gather feedback on inclusion and belonging

Success Criteria

- All members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect
- All pupils have equitable access to the curriculum, activities, and school life
- Complaints of discrimination and harassment are responded to promptly, fairly, and effectively
- The school environment is progressively made more physically and communicatively accessible
- Staff demonstrate inclusive practice in all aspects of their work
- The school community reflects a genuine culture of belonging and respect for diversity

Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Michael's School at a meeting on 24th June 2026.

It will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if legislation, guidance, or school circumstances require.

Signed: 

Date: 24th June 2026

Chairperson, Board of Management