



**Villiers School**

**Inclusion Policy**

**2022 - 2024**

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## **1. Characteristic Spirit and General Objectives of Villiers School**

1.1 Villiers School was founded according to the will of Mrs Hannah Villiers in 1821, to serve the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Churches. Villiers School scheme was subsequently amended to include the Methodist Church. Villiers School traditionally seeks to provide education in an environment which

promotes a Protestant ethos, however the School welcomes students from all religious traditions and none.

1.2 Villiers School is a co-educational day and boarding school with a Protestant ethos under the trusteeship of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Limerick. The Board of Governors for Villiers School holds patron and trustee responsibility.

1.3 “Protestant ethos” in the context of Villiers School means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland.

1.4 Villiers School was established on Henry Street, Limerick in 1821. It has been co-educational since its foundation. Villiers School relocated to its present site on the North Circular Road, Limerick, in 1954. It is a day and boarding school established to provide a broad-based education for students in its care.

1.5 While founded to serve the Protestant communities, Villiers School welcomes students of all faiths and none, into an inclusive and caring environment. Villiers School celebrates the diverse talents of all its students. Villiers School aims to develop academic curiosity and the pursuit of excellence, confidence and independent learning. A wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities is provided at Villiers School to facilitate a broad inclusive education. The Protestant ethos of Villiers School emphasises inclusion of and respect for others, and it encourages social justice and responsibility.

1.6 Villiers School aims to develop a strong moral and ethical code based on Christian principles. Regular assemblies and special services are an integral part of the life of Villiers School and enable particular celebration of Villiers School ethos. The Religious Education curriculum seeks to promote understanding of the sincerely held beliefs of those of all traditions; it is not a faith-formation programme. Students may thus reach a position where they may make an informed choice about personal faith in their lives.

1.7 In the Villiers School Admission Policy, “Protestant” means a church within the reformed tradition of Christianity.

1.8 Villiers School Learner Profile - The aim of Villiers School education is to prepare students for the wider world so that they can participate fully, both collaboratively and independently, in the local and international community. At Junior Cycle, all students work towards the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. Following on from this, almost all students will participate in Transition Year (which includes our IBDP link modules). At Senior Cycle, Villiers students will sit either the Irish Leaving Certificate or the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The aim of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is to develop internationally-minded individuals who embrace their shared humanity and collective guardianship of the planet, to create a better and more peaceful world.<sup>1</sup>

As educators we aim to instil the following learning skills:

- ENQUIRY

Nurturing and developing skills for enquiry and research, both independently and cooperatively.

- KNOWLEDGE

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ibo.org/benefits/learner-profile/>

Developing theoretical understanding and knowledge, across a wide variety of disciplines, which impact on both a global and local level.

- THINKING

Developing critical and creative thinking skills in order to analyse and act, in an ethical and rational manner, upon complex issues.

- COMMUNICATION

Increasing competency and confidence in expressing opinions in more than one language. Developing the ability to listen to others and to share ideas and collaborate on projects.

- PRINCIPLES

Take responsibility for our actions and the consequence of them, thereby ensuring that we respect the dignity and rights of others.

- OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Develop an appreciation and understanding of the culture, values and traditions of others, in addition to our own.

- CARE

Demonstrate empathy, compassion and respect for those around us and ensure that we impact those we interact with in a positive manner.

- RISK-TAKERS

Embrace challenges with determination and prudence, working both independently and collaboratively to develop ideas and strategies.

- BALANCE

Strive for balance academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

- REFLECTIVENESS

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

- LEADERSHIP

Take initiative when we see problems and cooperate with others to both motivate and facilitate change and guidance when needed.

- STEWARDSHIP

Strive to make a positive difference, so that the world we inhabit progresses into a more equitable and non-violent place.

## **2. Introduction**

Villiers School is committed to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) both within our school community and in the wider community. Villiers School strives to foster a safe and inclusive culture with equality at its heart so that diversity can flourish. We embrace our diversity as a strength, and we work with sincerity to enable all in our community to grow and flourish equally.

We place inclusive principles and practices at our core and are fully committed to understanding the challenges that exist for our community under the nine grounds for discrimination identified under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, namely, gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community<sup>2</sup>.

We seek to proactively address these, to the best of our abilities, whether this be in respect of recruitment, the curriculum or school culture:

- Through an EDI focus in our policies, practices, and procedures
- Through appropriate training, development and experiences
- Through promoting these principles across the curriculum

Discrimination, in any form, is not accepted within Villiers School, we aim to be a leading voice for equity, diversity and inclusion in Irish education.

In all IB programmes, teaching is designed to remove barriers to learning. Teaching is inclusive and values diversity. It affirms students' identities, and aims to create learning opportunities that enable every student to develop and pursue appropriate personal goals<sup>3</sup>.

Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. Inclusion is an organisational paradigm that involves change. It is a continual process of increasing learning and participation for all students. It addresses learning support requirements and questions the broader objectives of education, the nature of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. It is an educational approach to which all schools should aspire. Inclusion is facilitated in a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem-solving involving the whole school community. Villiers school recognises "the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment"<sup>4</sup>.

**This inclusion policy has been developed in the context of:**

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The EPSEN Act (2004)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ihrec.ie/guides-and-tools/human-rights-and-equality-in-the-provision-of-good-and-services/what-does-the-law-say/equal-status-acts/>

<sup>3</sup> What is an IB education? 2013:6

<sup>4</sup> EPSEN Act 2004 - <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/html>

- IB Access and Inclusion Policy<sup>5</sup>

**This Inclusion Policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies which are available on the Villiers School Website<sup>6</sup>:**

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- SEN Policy
- Anti-Racism Policy
- Intimate Care Needs Policy
- Language Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Assessment Policy

### **3. Barriers to Learning**

Barriers to learning may be found in the way schools are organized and resourced, their cultures and policies, the approaches to teaching and learning, the physical aspects of buildings and the ways in which individuals within the school community interact daily<sup>7</sup>.

Villiers School's Strategic plan for 2021-2024<sup>8</sup> has prioritised the development of this inclusion policy, as well as a multi-phase disability access programme. This programme has been developed from an internal review of potential barriers to learning for those with limited mobility, due to some physical characteristics of the buildings of the school. As of October 2022, phase 1 of the disability access programme is in the final stages of completion.

Villiers School statement on equity, diversity and inclusion, published on the school website, outlines the school's commitment to promoting inclusive principles and practices, as well as understanding potential barriers to inclusion that exist for the school community.

We seek to proactively address any barriers and challenges to inclusion, through an EDI focus in our policies, practices, and procedures, through appropriate training, development and experiences, and through promoting these principles across the curriculum<sup>9</sup>.

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- <sup>5</sup> *IB Access and inclusion policy* published November 2018 Updated February 2021, August 2021, February 2022

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.villiers-school.com/school-policies/>

<sup>7</sup> See p. 5&6 of *Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes Removing barriers to learning* Published January 2016 Updated December 2018, March 2019, May 2020, for descriptions and manifestations of such barriers.

<sup>8</sup> Villiers School Strategic Plan 2021-2024 <https://www.villiers-school.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Strategic-Plan-Villiers-School-2021-2024.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.villiers-school.com/edi/>

#### **4. Actively and Intentionally Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

Diversity is central to Villiers School. We encourage students from a wide range of nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs to interact positively and to work and socialise together in harmony. Villiers and the IB supports the following principles of an inclusive education where:

- education for all is considered a human right
- education is enhanced by the creation of affirmative, responsive environments that promote a sense of belonging, safety, self-worth and whole growth for every student
- every educator is an educator of all students
- learning is considered from a strength-based perspective
- learning diversity is valued as a rich resource for building inclusive communities
- all learners belong and experience equal opportunities to participate and engage in quality learning
- full potential is unlocked through connecting with, and building on, previous knowledge
- assessment provides all learners with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, which is rewarded and celebrated
- multilingualism is recognized as a fact, a right and a resource
- all students in the school community have a voice and are listened to so that their input and insights are taken into account
- diversity is understood to include all members of a community
- all students experience success as a key component of learning.

Throughout their course in Villiers, our students are taught to respect one another and to value diversity by the following means:

- In class, students are expected to accept others and respect their rights.
- Students learn about equity, diversity and inclusion through whole school events such as assemblies, guest speakers, information campaigns, and through an adherence to the general ethos and principles of inclusion and fairness permeating throughout the school. All members of the school community, without exception, are required to honour these principles.
- Through the Wellbeing programmes (SPHE, CSPE, PE and Wellbeing), students learn the importance of equality, respect for others and develop an understanding of human rights in a global setting.
- An ongoing curricular review (commenced in September 2022) has placed the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion as central to all Villiers School programmes, including the Junior Cycle, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.
- All young people look to adults as role models and will learn by example. All staff (teachers, boarding staff, SNAs, administrative staff and support staff, as well as members of the Boards of

Governors', are required to demonstrate principles of EDI in all that they do in the school community. This applies both in their interaction with the students and in how they treat each other.

- Villiers School is proud of its extensive co-curricular programme which engenders real opportunities for students to value and include each other and members of the wider community. Global Schools, MUN, Buddies without Borders, the Gaisce Awards and CAS component of the IB Diploma course provide ideal vehicles for this.

## **5. Responsibilities and good practice**

It is the responsibility of the senior leadership team and Board of Governors, in consultation with all school staff, parents, guardians, students and all stakeholders, to put in place processes to remove barriers to learning for every member of the school community.

It is the responsibility of every teacher, as a teacher of all students, to make sure that each student is exposed to teaching and learning that reaches them as individual learners.

It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to adhere to the particulars of the school anti-bullying policy and anti-racism policy.

Villiers school embraces the four principles of teaching that promote equal access to the curriculum for all learners across as outlined in the continuum of IB learning.

The four principles of good practice in the IB learning cycle are:

1. Affirm identity to build self-esteem
2. Value prior knowledge
3. Scaffold learning to support independence
4. Extend learning for all

## **6. Inclusive access arrangements for students are agreed as per the particulars in the Villiers School SEN Policy, Language Policy and Assessment Policy.**

The inclusive access arrangements provided for a student must:

- be carefully individualized, evaluated and monitored
- reflect the optimal support that the student requires
- be based on current, not past, requirements
- be drawn upon staff ongoing observations in the School

Villiers School Assessment Policy details inclusive access arrangements for in-house, Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate and IBDP examinations.

## **7. Review of Inclusion policy**

The review of the Inclusion Policy is a collaborative process involving relevant stakeholders including but not limited to Senior Management, EDI Committee, teachers and the IBDP Coordinator. Policies are formally reviewed at least bi-annually and any changes are submitted to the Board of Governors for acceptance.

Reviewed October 2022