



Villiers School

Equality and Human Rights Duty

All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and it originated in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014.



An Choimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Introduction

Villiers School is committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) 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.¹

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 a DEI focus in our policies, practices, and procedure
- Through appropriate training, development and experiences
- Through promoting these principles across the curriculum
- Through a commitment to Global Citizenship Education (GCE)²
- Through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³

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.

¹ <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/>

² <https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Teacher-Guidebook.pdf>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014⁴

Section 42 of the Act places a Duty, or statutory obligation, on public bodies to take positive action to:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services;
- Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) guidance identifies key groups as the focus when implementing the Duty:

“Keep the focus on people across the nine grounds included in equality legislation and on the potential impact of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion”.⁵

The nine grounds for discrimination as identified under Irish legislation in the Equal Status Acts⁶ are:

- Gender (including gender identity)
- Civil status
- Family status (including lone parents and carers)
- Age
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Race
- Religion
- Membership of the Traveller community

The Act identifies three key steps that public bodies should follow when implementing the Duty:

1. Assess
2. Address
3. Report

⁴ https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/ihrec_act_2014.pdf

⁵ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2019). Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Page 17.

⁶ Equal Status Act 2000. <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html>

Section 1- Assess

The following methods were used to gather and identify equality and human rights data in the school for students, parents and guardians, staff and other stakeholders:

- Focus groups and anecdotal evidence
- Engagement of an independent DEIJ consultant and whole school audit, conducted in 2021
- Academic research, conferences, workshops, training courses
- Department of Education Inspection findings

The whole school audit, which focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, was conducted by independent consultants Inclusion Labs in 2021, and had a sample size of 730 responses, including:

- Faculty and Staff (53 respondents)
- Senior Leaders and Governors (8 respondents)
- Students (513 respondents)
- Parents and Guardians (156 respondents)

Assessment Findings

Areas of strength

- The most recent whole school evaluation noted that Villiers School has a very inclusive culture.
- The school's admissions process shows it values having different cultures and identities in the school community.
- Most respondents to the audit believe they have a personal responsibility to celebrate diversity and be inclusive.
- The school communicates its commitment to addressing issues regarding discrimination.
- The school is willing to address and remedy any issues raised by students and/or families regarding identity and inclusion.

Areas for further development

- Build more awareness of social justice among all stakeholders
- Social justice education and training for staff
- Increased diversity and representation among school staff
- Developing the curriculum to include lessons related to social justice
- Increased opportunities for student voice
- Enhanced inclusion for persons whose identity, or identities, are often marginalised
- Increased diversity within the student body
- Increased gender equality
- Review of school communications and policies

Section 2- Address

Students and staff have the right to a school which is free from any form of discrimination, harassment, or aggressive or micro aggressive acts based on any of the nine grounds for discrimination as identified under Irish legislation in the Equal Status Acts⁷, namely gender (including gender identity), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, or membership of the Traveller community.

Action steps in the area of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice (DEIJ) are being implemented in the interest of preventing discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and treatment of our staff and students; and to protect the human rights of those staff and students. These action steps aim to improve accessibility, accountability, and delivery of care in the interest of driving cultural change and redefining organisational priorities, procedures, and practice.

Action Steps Implemented

Establishment of DEIJ School Based Initiatives:

- DEIJ Lead Group, DEIJ Collaborative Group and DEIJ Working Group established in 2021
- DEIJ themed school-based initiatives around gender identity, LGBTQ+, race, disability ongoing
- LGBTQ+ and Black Lives Matter Flag are flying in front of the School
- Staff Training is ongoing, and to date has included several forms of anti-racism training, training in the provision for students with additional educational needs, assistive technology, supporting LGBTQ+ students, and restorative practice.
- General education in the areas of DEIJ, international mindedness, and Human Rights, including guest speakers, in whole school assemblies and in smaller class groups and specific subjects. A conscious effort to include diverse and intersectional perspectives among guest speakers.
- Engagement with off-site projects and activities, including the SALAAM Project in the University of Limerick⁸, Black & Irish⁹ and the EPIC Museum¹⁰ in Dublin
- Themed events in the school – Events celebrated in 2023-2024 academic year include Empathy Week, Black History Month, Stand Up Week, AEN week, European Week Against Racism
- Parent Education, through Parent-Teacher Association

Student Groups

- Affinity, activist, and advocate groups in place include People of Colour Alliance (POCA), LGBTQ+, Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Club, Social Justice Club, Concern Debating, Buddies Without Borders & Global Schools
- Student Council includes reserved places for representatives of student groups

⁷ Equal Status Act 2000. <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html>

⁸ <https://www.ul.ie/artsoc/salaam/about-the-salaam-project>

⁹ <https://blackandirish.com/>

¹⁰ <https://epicchq.com/>

Language

- Official use of non-gendered language in school communications and policies – e.g., Head Students, Head of School, use of gender-neutral pronouns.
- Interrogating use of language if it could be problematic or have the potential to offend, e.g., the ‘FAGs’ as a name for the LGBTQ+ group was not allowed as it had the potential to be offensive.
- Building a language and nationality profile of our students, and celebrating the diverse languages within our school community.
- Providing translated documents when possible for learners whose native language is not English.

Development of School-based DEIJ Resources

- DEIJ section in school library, summer reading list themed around DEIJ, DEIJ Book Club
- DEIJ monthly calendar published
- Student-led video productions and guides

Policy development:

- Policies developed/reviewed include Anti-racism Policy, Inclusion Policy, SEN Policy, Language Policy, Dress Code & Uniform Policy, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy
- All policies reviewed for inclusivity

External Agency Connections:

- ‘Belong To’ LGBTQ+ Quality Mark¹¹
- ‘Jigsaw’ One Good School¹²
- ‘Schools of Sanctuary’ Ireland¹³
- Pieta ‘Amber Flag’ Initiative¹⁴
- ‘Yellow Flag’¹⁵
- WorldWise Global Schools¹⁶
- ‘Empathy Week’¹⁷

Awards & Achievements

- Awarded Jigsaw’s ‘One Good School’ in 2023
- Awarded LGBTQ+ Quality Mark by Belong To in 2023
- Awarded the Special Gold Passport Award by WorldWise Global Schools in 2024
- Villiers School became a member School of Sanctuary in 2024 and is working towards becoming a Champion School of Sanctuary in 2025
- Currently working towards achieving the Pieta Amber Flag
- Currently working towards achieving the Yellow Flag

¹¹ <https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/post-primary/lgbtq-quality-mark/>

¹² <https://jigsaw.ie/one-good-school/>

¹³ <https://schools-ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.pieta.ie/how-we-can-help/education-training/amber-flag-initiative/>

¹⁵ <https://yellowflag.ie/>

¹⁶ <https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/global-passport/>

¹⁷ <https://www.empathy-week.com/>

National advocacy:

- Participated in the review of the national anti-bullying strategy for schools
- Membership of the Advisory Group for the review of the EPSEN Act¹⁸
- Supporting training for the Irish School Heads Association (ISA)
- Participation in the Diversity and Inclusion in Education Network (DIEN)
- Invited to be part of the 'Schools of Sanctuary' monitoring team for other schools
- Providing mentorship on DEIJ for Network Ireland Limerick
- A Villiers teacher developed a module in Traveller Education and Inclusion which has been adopted by the NCCA as a Junior Cycle short course.
- Invited by BelongTo to speak at Education Strategy Day in 2024 attended by key leaders in educational bodies in Ireland
- Advocating for the broadening of the terms of reference of 'inclusion' in the Chief Inspector's Report (currently inclusion refers primarily to students with AEN)
- Advocating for mandatory DEIJ training and strategies in place in all schools (similar to the current Child safeguarding provision)
- Advocating for all schools to have a funded post of responsibility for DEIJ

International Connections:

- Participation in the International Schools Anti-Discrimination Taskforce in Geneva in 2022
- Leading workshops on inclusion in the UK for independent school leaders, in 2022 and 2024.
- Leading workshops internationally for international school leaders, in Vienna Austria in 2024.
- Student and staff involvement in The Stairs Project, an Erasmus+ mobility programme for students with AEN¹⁹
- Erasmus+ staff mobility training on Teaching Cultural Heritage, understanding modern societies and creating more inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable community environments²⁰

¹⁸ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/html>

¹⁹ <https://www.villiers-school.com/stairs-erasmus/>

²⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5gIN92KRd5/>

Section 3 - Report

Review of school communications and policies

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Review of all school communications and policies for inclusivity and to remove gendered language.	School policies and communications are inclusive of all stakeholders, regardless of gender, or gender identity.
The Villiers School dress code and uniform policy has been reviewed and modified, in particular in the context of gender equality and the inclusion of transgender and non-binary students.	The dress code and uniform policy is inclusive of all students, regardless of gender, or gender identity. There are no longer any specifications within the dress code which depend on gender.

Build more awareness of social justice

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Guest Speakers and assemblies	60% of staff surveyed felt guest speakers and assemblies were the most successful activities enacted in 2021/22. Further, 48% of students identified guest speakers as one of the most successful initiatives to encourage learning in this area.
DEIJ themed school-based initiatives around gender identity, LBGTQ+, race, and disability. Recent key events have included: - European Week Against Racism - AEN Week - Black History Month - LGBTQ+ Stand-Up Week - Empathy Week - International Day for Human Rights - International Women's Day - International Day Against Islamophobia	A clear theme from student feedback is their willingness to participate in DEIJ themed school initiatives. Students are also aware of key events and able to suggest focus for future events. Students increasingly involved in school-based initiatives.
Student Clubs, Affinity, activist, and advocate Groups	Student groups in place include People of Colour Alliance (POCA), LBGTQ+, Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Club, Social Justice Club, Concern Debating, Buddies Without Borders & Global Schools

Developing the curriculum to include social justice

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
<p>A curriculum review is being undertaken by staff under the guidance of the lead team. This has included the auditing and de-colonising of existing curricular content. It has also involved the promotion of curricular initiatives that align with the DEIJ calendar.</p> <p>Wellbeing subjects have been targeted for direct instruction and workshops (some student-led) for social justice-themed content.</p> <p>Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum has been reviewed in 2023 and reviews of Civic, Societal & Political Education (CSPE) and Wellbeing are ongoing in 2024.</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that a high proportion of teachers are engaging with DEIJ themes. At the end of the school year, schemes of work will be critically examined.</p> <p>All Junior Cycle students have had exposure to at least three DEIJ lessons delivered by senior cycle students in association with staff mentors.</p> <p>In a recent review of initiatives, students highlighted in-class themed lessons (54% of students surveyed) as the most effective way to enhance learning in DEIJ.</p>

Social justice education and training for staff

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
<p>Staff training has been focused on advocacy. Whole school DEIJ themed staff training has included the use of assistive technology and supporting the management of challenging behaviour. Voluntary CPD has also been undertaken by many staff on anti-racism and supporting LGBTQ+ students, as well as restorative justice.</p> <p>DEIJ lead group training includes a Postgraduate Diploma in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion from the University of Limerick, Certification in Coaching and Restorative Practice, as well as conferences and workshops run by the Boarding Schools Association (BSA), International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS) and Association of International Educators and Leaders of Colour (AIELOC).</p>	<p>75% of staff respondents, when surveyed on the impact of curriculum review, identified more training as a desirable development.</p> <p>Specific CPD and whole-staff training is of high priority within ongoing DEIJ implementation strategies.</p>

Increased diversity and representation among school staff

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
<p>The school is committed to recruiting a diverse work force. The school strives to ensure representation from across the protected characteristics where possible. We have modified our recruitment processes to encourage a diverse range of applicants. The IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) also gives us a unique opportunity to recruit teachers from a diverse range of cultural and geographical backgrounds.</p> <p>A DEIJ statement has been added to the careers section of our website: “Villiers School is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion both within our school community and in the wider community. We welcome and actively encourage applications from individuals of diverse and minority backgrounds.”</p>	<p>We hope that the impact of a more deliberate commitment to DEIJ in recruitment and hiring practices will be a more diverse staff with a wider set of experiences.</p> <p>A more diverse staff will result in increased representation and cultural diversity, as well as international mindedness.</p>

Increase opportunities for student voice

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Formalisation of student alliance groups [LGBT+, POCA (People of colour alliance) AEN (Additional educational needs), Social Justice Club]	Students have a safe space where they are encouraged to share their voice and their identities.
Representation from student alliance groups within DEIJ Working Group. Reformed Student Council with reserved places to ensure representation from student alliance groups.	Increased presence of diverse student voices. Members of student groups which can often be marginalised in society are now represented within the student council and their voice can be centered within the school community.

Enhanced inclusion for persons whose identities are often marginalised

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Student groups - AEN Club, POCA, LGBT+ Alliance, Social Justice Club	These groups are explicitly included on the school’s extra-curricular timetable. They operate at lunchtimes and have seen significant numbers of students in attendance. The student groups have nominated Student Council representatives and DEIJ Working Group members to bring forward talking and action points for DEIJ Leads. In a review of initiatives in this area, POCA was identified by staff and students as one of the most effective initiatives in 2022.

Physical modifications to campus for persons with disabilities and/or reduced mobility. In 2022, phase one of our accessibility project came to completion, including ramps to the dining hall and hockey pitch, automated entrance doors around the school, and renovations to make the student hub accessible. Phase two is planned in 2024/2025.	Increased accessibility to hockey pitch, dining hall and student hub. Doorways which can be opened using a button, so that wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility, can access the school buildings autonomously.
For persons of varied socioeconomic background, a sponsorship fund in place for discretionary school uniform and equipment, educational fee bursaries and Board of Governors assistance fund. Trips away policy update, with advanced notice and consultation for overseas trips with substantial costs. School jackets available under sponsorship for students who require assistance in purchasing a school jacket.	It is hoped that this will allow more equal access to and participation in optional school activities and equipment to all students, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances.
A sponsorship fund was put in place in 2023 to support refugees to attend school in Villiers.	Three students commenced tuition in Villiers in 2023 funded by this scholarship fund.

Diversity within the student body

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
The school admissions office is actively encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds.	The school has 45 nationalities currently represented in the student body.

Diversity and inclusion within extracurricular activities

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
A broad range of school clubs, societies and sports are offered and made available to all genders.	Student groups (AEN, POCA, LGBTQ+ and Social Justice Club) continue to be included in our lunchtime clubs' roster.
Accessibility to sports fields and facilities has been enhanced and improved with the addition of wheelchair accessibility ramps to dining hall and hockey pitch, the accessible student hub and automated entrance doors.	Students have increased ease of access to extra-curricular activities.
Trips away and school activities and modules are continuously reviewed to put individual plans put in place for students who may require additional support or special arrangements, for example, students with additional needs, mobility issues, or non-cisgender students.	All students are included in all school activities, modules and trips away in a way that is individual and respectful of their needs and abilities.

Increased gender equality in the student body

<u>Action</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms and changing rooms	There are 12 student and 2 staff designated gender-neutral bathroom areas in the school spread across the campus. There is a designated gender-neutral changing room for PE and After-School Sports.
Introduction of gender-neutral school uniform and dress code	Uniform is no longer gender-specific. All students are required to wear navy and all students have the option of wearing trousers or skirts. All students have the option to have a single piercing in each ear.
Facility to accommodate non-cisgender boarding students	A designated dormitory area for non-cisgender boarding students has been identified and can be made available if needed.
Facility to accommodate non-cisgender students on trips away and overnight trips	Individual planning is carried out when arranging trips away to ensure suitable accommodation for non-cisgender students in a manner that is comfortable and respectful of all students.