



# **BALBRIGGAN ETNS EQUALITY REVIEW SEPT / OCT 2012**

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# BACKGROUND

- Human Rights Month – Each October
- Human Rights Month 2011 – Equality Theme
- Equality legislation: Nine grounds  
Gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, Traveller community

# BACKGROUND

- Equality Temperature Survey 2011 – gender and age highlighted
- Letter received by post. Pilot schools sought by E.A to conduct Equality Audit — application form
- Equality audit to become staff action for HR month 2012
- BETNS chose to participate in Review

# Equality Audit Tool

- Developed by the Equality Authority
- Self-evaluation questionnaire (58 questions)
- School records questionnaire
- Guidelines for student focus group
- Guidelines for parent focus group
- Guidelines for staff focus group
- Policy questionnaires
  - Enrolment, code of behaviour, equality, SEN, SPHE, RSE, Visual Arts/Learn Together

# The Process

- Facilitator selection process – conducted by co-ordinating team in March 2012
- Meeting with co-ordinating team and facilitator, Seán O' Reilly, September 2012 – agreed on an audit plan
- Informal meeting with staff during Croke Park Hour - Staff self-evaluation questionnaires
- Policies reviewed by facilitator and staff focus groups

# The Process

- Meetings arranged with: Board of Management, Student Council, Parent focus group
- Review undertaken of school communication process / website, school records
- Written report provided for school by Seán – presented to staff at a Croke Park meeting
- Feedback to Equality Authority only on use of the resource – Seán / Fintan
- Development of an equality action plan – school (based on agreed priorities)

# Recommendations

- School practice is strongly underpinned by the spirit of the equality legislation
- Implicit rather than explicit
- Policies do not fully reflect very good practice
- Clear strengths relating to religion, race, disability
- Varying less frequent reference to other grounds

# Recommendations

- Develop explicit equality policy to reflect current practice and to check against nine grounds
- Review other policies to ensure that (i) they are complementary and (ii) reflect reality
- Analyse student data against (some of) nine grounds
- Seek parent / guardian views on school communications
- Consider more flexible assessments
- Ways to better include views of non-teaching staff



# Feedback to Equality Authority

## Negatives

- 1 Not as 'analytical' of practice as of policy
- 2 No central focus on the role/practice of the Board of Management.
- 3 Guidelines needed from EA to include clarity re enrolment, racial-bullying, exclusion etc.
- 4 The selection process of the EA appointed officer was a huge waste of time for the teachers involved.
- 5 Fears that analysis of data would lead to profiling and stereotyping in our normal practice.
- 7 The issue of disaggregating data on equality grounds –EA and DES
- 8 Some concerns amongst staff that there should have been some focus on the BOM as an recruiter/employer re Equality issues.

# Feedback to Equality Authority

## Positives:

- 1 An excellent experience that focused the minds of the whole school community for the duration of its 'presence'
- 2 A comprehensive policy-analysis programme.
- 3 A cause of reflective practice for all of the teachers and SNAs.
- 4 A good examination of data collection procedures in the school.
- 5 A good analysis of curricular provision in the school re Equality issues.
- 6 Very good 'modelling' of evaluative-practice by Sean O Reilly.
- 7 Marks out clear future steps for enhancing Equality issues in the school for the coming years.