



## **POLICY (Number: Ki) DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY**

Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Created 2006)

### **1. Commitment**

Somerset House (hereafter referred to as SH) is committed to encouraging, understanding and valuing diversity. In pursuit of this broad goal the School undertakes to implement strategic initiatives which will see the diversity of pupils and staff increasing and which will encourage the development of a School ethos which is respectful and embracing of diversity.

### **2. Rationale**

Diversity is a global imperative and the capacity to manage diversity well is a universally recognised competence which enables children and young adults to assert themselves successfully in a complex world. As a school, we have a responsibility to provide a teaching environment which will provide pupils with the cognitive, social and emotional skills required for successful living in a diverse world.

### **3. Diversity and Employment Equity**

SH complies with the requirements of the Employment Equity Act and is addressing the demographics of its staff profile through its' Employment Equity plan. With regards to teaching staff in particular, the School is committed to increasing the numbers of black Teachers, especially those with full Classroom responsibilities. In line with the requirements of the Employment Equity Act, progress will be measured along the lines of race, gender and disability.

### **4. Inclusivity**

Outside the constraints of the Employment Equity Act, SH's definition of diversity is more inclusive. With regards to both pupils (and their families) and Staff, race, gender and disability remain important variables; however, language, religion, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability (both physical and intellectual) and culture are all elements of diversity which the School will embrace and address. This list is not exhaustive.

### **5. An approach to Diversity**

SH endorses what is known globally as an anti-bias approach to diversity. Within schools this approach has the following elements:

- It is inclusive in that it recognises, understands, appreciates and draws on all differences and similarities;
- Affirms all children, their families and their experiences;
- Fosters the development of positive self-concepts;
- Is pro-active: it assumes that bias exists and addresses such biases;
- Challenges any form of prejudice, stereotyping, bias and discrimination;
- Encourages us to unlearn prejudices;
- It views diversity in a holistic way (goes beyond race and gender) and focuses on issues beyond pupil and staffing profile. These include:
  - Curriculum issues;
  - Learner support materials;
  - The Visual environment;
  - School policy and practice;
  - Relationship issues (staff, parents and pupils)
  - Community Outreach programmes.

### **7. Strategic Interventions: School Ethos**

SH, through policies and practices established over decades, believes it is an institution with a positive foundation for embracing diversity. The school is both co-educational and non-denominational and has successfully integrated children from a variety of different religious, cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. The on-going challenge for SH is to remain vigilant with regards to both the internal and external context within which the school operates and to remain open to incorporating positive changes as well



as safeguarding that which is unique and special in the Schools Ethos. The following are initiatives which are important for the school:

1. Staff development: Staff are exposed on a regular basis to opportunities for development which assists them with both personal and professional growth in the field of diversity.
  2. Curriculum development: The formal and informal curricula reflect an understanding of the anti-bias approach; this approach is integrated into teaching materials, the visual classroom environment, the emotional and social skills children are exposed to and other processes deemed important by teaching staff.
  3. Language curriculum: English is the teaching language of the school; Afrikaans is offered as a second language and Xhosa as a third language. This multi-lingual offering is important from a diversity perspective and constant improvements are made to the ways in which the additional languages are taught, perceived and experienced.
  4. Parent Forums: SH engages with parents on a regular basis to share information around diversity related issues and to obtain their views and suggestions.
  5. Outreach Programme: The School is constantly seeking ways to improve its focus on Community Outreach projects. The exposure of children to relationships outside of their usual communities is viewed as an important component of Diversity.
8. Strategic Interventions: Pupil Diversity  
SH admits and welcomes children who reflect the many facets of diversity. However, the School is conscious that, from a racial perspective, its demographics do not reflect those of the broader South African community. In an on-going attempt to increase the numbers of black children, SH has the following initiatives in place:
1. The admissions policy favours historically disadvantaged children;
  2. The diversity policy is structured around increasing the numbers of black children in the school;
  3. There is a school based initiative in place to provide bursary funds for black children who cannot afford the fees of SH.
  4. The marketing committee constantly assess ways in which the school can attract black parents to the school.
9. Responsibility  
The successful implementation of strategic diversity initiatives within SH is the responsibility of the Head. The Board supports the Head and provides appropriate strategic input.
- Teaching, administrative and support staff are responsible for encouraging and promoting diversity, in line with this policy statement.
10. Limitations to Diversity  
It is recognised that there are limitations to the Schools capacity to be all-inclusive. As examples: the school may lack the resources a child with special needs requires; a child with limited English may not meet the minimum requirements for entry into certain grades; parental demands with regards to the diverse needs of their children may be beyond the capability of the school or may conflict with the School's ethos. Challenges in this regard may arise prior to admission or once a child has been accepted.  
Parents whose children are accepted into the School sign an Acceptance of Entry" form which has the following clause : "The School's rules and regulations, as amended from time to time, shall bind and be observed by my son/daughter and, insofar as they concern me, by me." Challenges being experienced by schools in South Africa have tended to relate to religion, cultural dress or ornamentation, language and academic ability, in no order of priority.



In the event of a challenge from the parent body, the following process will apply:

1. The issue will be brought to the attention of the Head who will set up a meeting with the parents and attempt to resolve the issue.
2. If resolution looks unlikely, the Head will advise the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and they will agree on a further process, with the assistance of the Board, or a Board sub-committee.
3. An external mediator may be engaged by the school in the event of a deadlock or the threat of legal action.