

Learn • Trust • Respect • Sense of Humour

## **OFFENSIVE MATERIALS AND THEMES POLICY**

### **RATIONALE:**

Parents have the right to assume that their children will not be exposed to offensive materials or themes whilst in the care of the school.

### **GENERAL STATEMENT:**

In order to achieve the above position Cranbourne West Primary School needs to have procedures in the following areas:

- ways to ensure that materials and themes are previewed to establish that they are not seen as offensive by our students or their parents.
- ways to address any objections received from students or their parents on this issue.

For the purpose of this policy the definition of offensive materials or themes is adapted from the one used in the classification of films and computer games. It includes any materials or themes which:

- use inappropriate language
- promote any illegal activity
- show excessive violence
- deal with matters of a sexual nature
- depict drug usage
- portray scenes of cruelty and/or revolting or abhorrent material ... in a manner that a reasonable person would generally regard as unsuitable for the age of the relevant students.

### **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES:**

1. The following approach should be taken in determining whether relevant students or their parents may find materials or themes to be offensive:
  - consider the words, behaviour or themes in terms of the standards of morality decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable persons
  - consider the impact of the words, behaviour or themes on persons from different ethnic, religious, social or cultural backgrounds
  - consider the context in which the words, behaviour or themes appear
  - consider the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) and the general character of the material or theme, including whether it is in a medical, legal or scientific journal or publication
  - assess the impact of the material or theme on the age group of the students, and how parents might react to their children studying the material or theme.

After consideration of the above, the Management Team should make decisions about the degree of offensiveness of the material or theme and then take the following actions:

**1.1 Non-Offensive Materials or Themes.** If the Management Team considers the materials or themes to be suitable for the relevant students and that a reasonable parent would not find these offensive, the materials or themes should be available for teachers to include in the curriculum.

**1.2 Slightly or Mildly Offensive Materials or Themes.** If the Management Team considers that some of the relevant students or their parents might find the materials or themes to be slightly or mildly offensive then:

- The Management Team should instruct the teaching staff to replace the materials or themes with alternative non-offensive materials or themes that are available, or
- If no alternative materials or themes are available, the Management Team should follow these steps:

- I. Re-consider the purpose of introducing (students to) the materials or themes
- II. Assess the educational nature of the materials or themes and the manner in which they will be studied.
- III. Determine whether the educational value justifies their use
- IV. Consult the School Council (or a committee of the council appointed for the purpose)
- V. Allow the materials or themes to be used but issue a forewarning. Where students are to be exposed to such materials or themes, the parents are to be informed well in advance:
  - a) Of the nature of the materials or themes that may offend, and
  - b) That parents have the right to object to the materials or themes.

**1.3 Highly Offensive Materials or Themes.** If the Management Team or School Council considers that the materials or themes are likely to be highly offensive to any relevant students or their parents, they must not be used irrespective of their education value. Such materials or themes may be appropriate for study at University or TAFE institutes by adults, but they are inappropriate in schools. There will be a range of matters that fall between mildly offensive and highly offensive, in which case the Management Team and School Council should err on the side of caution and not use them.

2. The following procedures are to be applied when assessing and determining any objections received in respect of materials or themes for study in school:

- the Management Team should consider the reasons for the objection to determine its bona fides and whether it is reasonably held.
- if the Management Team is unable to accept the objection as bona fide or for any reason is unable to uphold the objection, it should be referred to the School Council, to consider the reasons for the objection and to determine its bona fides and whether it is reasonably held, and whether it should be upheld. School Council determinations will be implemented by the Management Team.
- in the event of an objection (or objections) being upheld, the school will offer alternative materials or themes to those children.

3. At Cranbourne West Primary School it is recognised that the main areas where the materials or themes could cause offence are:

- the selection of books for purchase

- the chosen themes for class study
- the choice of films or videos to be shown
- access to the Internet.

In each of these (or any other) cases the procedures outlined previously will be followed. For the first three, control is in the hands of staff, but special protocols are to be implemented for Internet access where it is possible for children to be exposed to offensive material or themes without the knowledge of the supervising staff member. These protocols will include:

- a firm understanding by the children of the boundaries within which they are permitted to operate
- such barriers as are possible to be in place to prevent children from moving outside these boundaries
- clearly defined consequences for children who move outside the boundaries.

The above is to be **STRICTLY** enforced!

**EVALUATION:**

The policy is to be closely monitored by the Management Team.

School Use Only

Version	2
Date	
Ratified	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2017