

# EQUITY PLAN 2022–2025

## Oulu International School

Oulu International School forms a caring community which underlines **inter-cultural awareness**, **responsibility**, and **respect** as our core values. We do our best to put our mission statement *Joy of Learning in a Diverse and Caring Community* into action in everything we do. We care for each other and strive for an **active** yet safe and **peaceful school day** for all students and staff members. This requires not only **accessible facilities** but also careful planning and an **open-minded atmosphere** in terms of equity among the whole community. Identity is seen as an ongoing process, and OIS adults are to support the growth of every student.

According to the Human Rights Act and Finnish law, equity means that **all people are equal** regardless of their age, sex, ethnic or national origin, citizenship, language, religion or conviction, opinion, disability, health, sexual orientation or any other personal trait – basic rights belong to everyone. OIS emphasizes this as a community in everything we do.

Our students are chosen through **language proficiency tests**, which are held by a well-trained testing team. The process is clear and unambiguous, and the decisions are made based on the performance in these tests only. Whenever there's a need, we modify our language tests so that, for example, someone with a disability is able to take part. All our test procedures have been approved by the Oulu City.

Also, the **staff recruitment** is based only on the interviews, training and skills of the candidates, not e.g. on health, sex, age or nationality. In the recruitment process we follow the Oulu City guidelines, and are flexible depending on the need and, for example, interviews by a video call can be arranged to ensure equal opportunities for everyone to apply to our school.

In OIS we do not just work against discrimination of any kind, but we also take **special measures** to improve the status and circumstances of a certain group or individual that is exposed to unequal treatment. We for example, plan and conduct **special education measures** carefully and offer different ways to show learning. **Evaluation** at OIS is versatile, and reflection takes place frequently.

We also make sure that our **CLIL approach** is effective and that it supports both the English and Finnish skills of the students as well as their different mother tongues.

Our **teaching materials** are carefully chosen and made – they show and respect differences. We promote equity among everyone, but we do it in an **age-appropriate way**, for example, in Biology and Health Education lessons, or whenever there is the need. We respect the values and beliefs of **versatile families**, but we are also aware that the **Finnish law** is our first guideline.

Community as a whole is important at OIS and therefore we work actively together with families. We e.g. make sure with Oulu City that the **interpretation services** are available whenever there is a need for them. We meet regularly with OIS parent association (OISPA) to collect ideas from parents and families to improve and make OIS a better place for everyone. We respect each other and communicate, for example, the content of our celebrations when there is the need to do so, and we make sure that the alternative programs offered are as festive. However, we also show respect towards important celebrations in **versatile cultures** and arrange a variety of celebrations to avoid presenting one religion or conviction over the other.

As an international school, our approach to learning and teaching is **intercultural**. We appreciate the local connections we have, but we also see e.g. **Erasmus trips** as an opportunity to widen our global world-view. However, we take into consideration that basic education in Finland is free-of-charge, and we do not put students into an unequal position when planning class or field trips.

Discrimination of any kind is strongly forbidden at OIS. We take students opinions and worries carefully into consideration and, for example, emphasize the importance of the active role of the **Student Council** and **Tukioppilaat**. We work actively against bullying and racism, and we bear in mind that as a whole community we are responsible for a **discrimination-free school**.

In addition to asking feedback from the OISPA, we discussed with staff and both PYP and MYP Student Council members in spring 2022 about equity in our community. It seems that all in all OIS is **functioning well**. We take each other into consideration, and different supportive measures are versatile. We do our best that different cultures, religions and convictions, nationalities and

ethnicities are respected – we are an **inter-culturally aware community** where everyone is unique and special regardless of e.g. their heritage, background or sexual orientation.

However, based on the equity discussions among our community, we must pay a bit more attention to ensuring that all students get their chance to share their ideas and thoughts. Older students felt, that especially skills **how to disagree in a respectful way** is something to take a closer look. Therefore, one of our goals is to **emphasize the freedom of expressing oneself** yet with respect towards others, and also to offer different kinds of channels for our students to get their voice heard.

Both PYP and MYP Student Council representatives mentioned that some students tend **joke around** with the themes regarding equity. Hence there is of course zero tolerance for bullying, we must keep our eyes and ears open and act accordingly when we face this kind of a behaviour. The other thing is to educate our students about equity themes. We believe that knowledge is the key to prevent prejudices.

In conclusion, for the next three-year period, OIS will emphasize especially the theme of **being heard**. In addition, the **concept of humour** should be clarified in order to prevent bullying in a form of joking. We will start to implement these themes as of August 2022 (e.g. training[s], theme day).