

NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY  
EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
(NTMK E.T.N.S.)

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Whole School Plan for

**ETHICAL EDUCATION**

# Ethical Education

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## *Introductory Statement and Rationale*

The plan was formulated by the teachers of the school in August 2019. The Ethical Education Plan recognises and endeavours to adopt the values that are set out in the ethos of the school. It attempts to support and sustain a harmonious environment in which potential is nurtured through the co-operation between staff, pupils, parents, board members and all other relevant parties. The school ideally hopes to achieve the aims and objectives set out in the Learn Together Curriculum by introducing this plan.

We endorse the aims of the Learn Together Curriculum as set out on p. 10:

- Foster in each child a knowledge and understanding of different value and belief systems in an atmosphere of critical inquiry and mutual respect
- Prepare children to become caring members of a multicultural society with the necessary intercultural skills to enrich such a society
- Address issues of spirituality and morality
- Facilitate in children the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements
- Support children in cultivating their spirituality in a secure environment
- Raise awareness in children of issues of human rights, justice and equality in society
- Develop in children an ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment
- Provide children with a range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens

The ethical curriculum followed by the school is called the *Learn Together Curriculum*. It is comprised of four strands: Morality & Spirituality; Equality & Justice; Belief systems; and Ethics & the Environment.

Denominational instruction is facilitated by the school insofar as groups are permitted to use the school premises. This is organised by parents outside of school hours.

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*This Ethical Education Plan will be addressed under the following headings:*

## **Curricular Planning:**

1. Strands and strand units
2. Assessment and record keeping
3. Children with different needs
4. Equality of participation and access

## **Organisational Planning:**

5. Timetable
6. Homework
7. Library
8. Resources and ICT
9. Individual teachers' planning and reporting
10. Staff development
11. Parental involvement
12. Community links

## *Curricular planning*

### **1. Strands and strand units**

The curriculum is delineated at four levels—infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes—and is divided into four strands: Moral & Spiritual; Equality & Justice; Belief Systems; and Ethics & the Environment. Each of these strands contains particular objectives.

Rochestown Educate Together NS will teach aspects of all four strands each year and content objectives will be chosen in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in Ethical Education over a one year period. Newtownmountkennedy Educate Together NS have created this timetable to reflect this approach:

### **TERM 1**

#### **September:**

*Moral and Spiritual:* Golden Rules (Infants)

*Equality and Justice:* Golden Rules (Infants)

*Ethics and the Environment:* Recycling (Infants)

*Belief Systems:* Rosh Hashannah, Ramadan, Eid (Infants)

#### **October:**

*Moral and Spiritual:* Sense of Self (Infants)

*Equality and Justice:* Uniqueness and Difference (Infants)

*Ethics and the Environment:* School garden (Infants)

*Belief Systems: Harvest, Halloween (Infants)*

**November:**

*Moral and Spiritual: My Family (Infants)*

*Equality and Justice: Children's Rights (Infants)*

*Ethics and the Environment: Reuse and recycle (Infants)*

*Belief Systems: Key Figures (Infants)*

**December:**

*Moral and Spiritual: Self-reflection (Infants)*

*Equality and Justice: Fairness, respect (Infants)*

*Ethics and the Environment: Winter (Infants)*

*Belief Systems: Hannukah, Advent, Christmas (Infants)*

**TERM 2**

**January:**

*Moral and Spiritual: Friendship & Co-operation (Infants)*

*Equality and Justice: Rights in Class; Golden Rules (Infants)*

*Ethics and the Environment: Cycle of life (Infants)*

*Belief Systems: New Year's, Chinese New Year, Celebrations (Infants)*

**February:**

*Moral and Spiritual: Anti-bullying (Infants)*

*Equality and Justice: Kindness, caring, justice, anti-bullying (Infants),*

*Ethics and the Environment: Tidy, clean school (Infants)*

*Belief Systems: Religious Buildings (Junior Infants)*

**March:**

*Moral and Spiritual: Feelings (Infants)*

*Equality and Justice: Whole school activities (World Book Day; Seachtain na Gaeilge) (Infants)*

*Ethics and the Environment: Trees and plants (Infants)*

*Belief Systems: Food (Junior Infants)*

**April:**

*Moral and Spiritual:* Co-operation, negotiation and decision making (Infants)

*Equality and Justice:* Co-operation and negotiation (Infants)

*Ethics and the Environment:* Natural and manmade materials (Infants)

*Belief Systems:* Easter, Passover (Infants)

**TERM 3****May:**

*Moral and Spiritual:* Peaceful meditation (Infants)

*Equality and Justice:* Peace (Infants); begin to distinguish between wants and needs; identify some basic rights

*Ethics and the Environment:* Peace in nature (Infants)

*Belief Systems:* Wesak, Bealtaine, (Infants);

**June:**

*Moral and Spiritual:* Poems/stories about nature (Infants); Read stories and poems illustrating core values.

*Equality and Justice:* Committees in the school (Infants); have opportunities to articulate his/her attitudes, experiences and values; develop decision-making, co-operation and negotiation skills

*Ethics and the Environment:* Summer/Nature (Infants); Participate in nature walks; environmental awareness (littering)

*Belief Systems:* Summer Solstice (Infants)

**2. Assessment and record keeping**

- Teachers ensure that a broad range of assessment tools is being used, i.e.
  - Teacher observation
  - Teacher designed tasks/tests
  - Portfolios of children's work
  - Checklists/profiles
- Use made of the results of assessments:
  - Results are assessed to see that they correspond with ability and general expectation
  - Teachers share information with each other both formally and informally, at staff meetings, through transfer of files at the end of a school year.

- Teachers share information with parents
  - at annual parent-teacher meetings
  - incidental meetings throughout the year
  - through notes home and
  - informally at home-time
- Teachers share information with children in their copies
  - orally throughout the day or
  - in mini-meetings with them
- Teachers share information with other professionals as a need arises.
- Assessment information is reported to parents when teacher-designed tests are completed, if necessary.

### **3. Children with different needs**

*(Refer to school's Special Education Needs Policy)*

#### Children with learning disabilities

- Teachers support and ensure the participation of these children in Ethical Education activities through collaboration with the SEN team, differentiation of activities, differentiation of questioning, differentiation of expectations, provision of visual aids e.g. PECS, effective use of SNA support, use of ICT
- All children are enabled to make an important contribution regardless of academic achievement
- The specific responsibilities of class teachers, LS/RT, SNAs and other relevant parties are set out in the SEN Policy (*see Section 2.0*)
- There is a collaborative approach in devising
  - Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (IPLPs) for pupils who have been selected for supplementary teaching (refer to Learning-Support Guidelines pp. 68 – 72)
  - IEPs for pupils who require an Individual Education Plan (refer to Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process, NCSE)

#### Children with exceptional ability

- The school supports children of exceptional ability through collaboration with parents and other relevant parties e.g. Educational Psychologists. The school may also seek advice from appropriate agencies e.g. [www.giftedkids.ie](http://www.giftedkids.ie), Irish Centre for Talented Youth, An Óige Thréitheach
- The school aspires to promote good practice by providing for:

- A differentiated programme within the classroom and/or homework
- Accelerated reading programmes
- Use of ICT
- Independent research projects
- Collaboration with parents
- The consulting of organisations such as *An Óige Thréitheach, Centre for Talented Youth*

#### **4. Equality of participation and access**

- Gender issues that need to be considered in relation to the teaching of Ethical Education:
  - Equal opportunities are given to boys and girls to participate in discussions, presentations
  - Equal opportunities are given to boys/girls to participate in activities
  - Materials being used should not be deemed sexist
  - Teachers are cognisant of developmental differences between boys and girls when starting to learn about Ethical Education
  - Boys/girls have equal access to, and opportunities to use, ICT
- All children have access to services, facilities or amenities in the school environment
- The Principal, staff, BOM and PA examine potential supports, as and where necessary, for the following:
  - Members of the Traveller community
  - Children experiencing any form of disadvantage
  - Children with disabilities
  - Families with literacy problems
  - Families for whom English is not the first language

### *Organisational planning*

#### **5. Timetable**

- The time allocated at each level for Ethical Education is in accordance with the curriculum set out by the NCCA, i.e. 2 & half hours per week for all classes (refer to time allocation in the curriculum, Primary School Curriculum Introduction pp. 67 – 70).

- Discrete time is timetabled for elements of the Ethical Education programme at the discretion of the class teacher and can vary from week to week.
- The process of Ethical Education learning is also developed through integrated activities or thematic/cross curricular approach

## **6. Homework**

- Ethical Education homework should reflect the active learning approach as described in the curriculum.
- Efforts are made to assign all pupils the same homework. However, special consideration is given to some pupils based on specific requirements e.g. exemptions from Irish, or based on special education needs e.g. those with mild general learning difficulties.
- There is co-ordination between the class teacher and the learning-support/resource teacher in setting homework assignments.

## **7. Library**

- A range of Ethical Education books will be developed in the class libraries. There will be a variety of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. A range of abilities will be catered for at all levels.
- A school resource library will be developed to contain supplementary reading material for use in all of the classes.

## **8. Resources**

- Resources that will be used include:
  - World Faiths jigsaw, Human Rights Charter, ENFO: The Environmental Information Service etc.

This is not an exhaustive list. Further resources can be found in the school resource library

- Resources are appropriate for Ethical Education, i.e. the choice of supplementary reading material will be age- and ability-appropriate for the class
- Each class teacher is responsible for their own class' resources.
- Resources are stored in the classrooms and in the resource room (office), where they are easily accessible to teachers and children alike

### **ICT**

- Software currently available in the school to support Ethical Education: Microsoft Office, Notepad.
- Software is stored near the computers in individual classrooms.



- School personnel can research new software. The principal is responsible for arranging for demonstrations, opportunities to try out material and assess whether or not it should be purchased.
- Computers can assist children with special needs through using software programmes to support their learning. This is sometimes done in class and sometimes with the LSRT teacher
- ICT can be used to help children present their work
- Children can research deity, beliefs, environmental issues etc. using the Internet
- Teachers encourage interaction and dialogue during use of computers
- A code of practice to ensure safe Internet usage was ratified during 2013. Teachers are expected to familiarise themselves with material on websites prior to use by the children. There is ongoing monitoring of these sites by the class teachers.

## **9. Individual teachers' planning and reporting**

- The whole school plan and the Learn Together Curriculum documents for Ethical Education provide information and guidance to individual teachers for their long and short-term planning. Teachers have a copy of the plan on their computer to refer to when preparing for individual long- and short- term planning. A copy of the plan is also kept in the office.
- The Cúntas Míosúil (Monthly report) serves in assisting the teachers in developing the whole school plan. They also help individual teachers in their preparation for following years. The Cúntas Míosúil for each classroom is compiled into one book and each book is stored in the office at the end of the school year. Teachers have access to all books to assist with their short-term planning

## **10. Staff development**

- Teachers have access to current research, reference books, resource materials, and websites dealing with ethical learning. All staff are expected to take individual responsibility for monitoring developments, as well as sharing these with other staff members both informally or formally at staff meetings.
- There are courses available run through Educate Together and teachers are encouraged to attend.
- There is encouragement to share the expertise acquired at these courses. This may be done incidentally or at a staff meeting.
- Time allocated at staff meetings to discuss Ethical Education issues under the 'Curricular areas' section if any staff member wishes to contribute.
- There are opportunities for team-teaching in these areas. This depends on the needs within a class and the availability of time under General Allocation or the benefit of it in relation to an individual child's resource hours

## 11. Parental involvement

- Parents are aware of the central importance of Ethical Education in the learning process.
- Parents are aware of the importance of involving children in purposeful Ethical Education-related activities. Parents can assist their child's development by engaging in talk and discussion, questioning etc. Parents are encouraged to discuss any questions about the curriculum with their class teacher.
- The school may lend parents resources which would be useful for their child's ethical development e.g. library books, CDs, games etc.
- Parents can use ICT to support their child's Ethical Education through use of websites such as [http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/index\\_4\\_11.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/index_4_11.shtml). The school supports and encourages any training offered in the use of ICT and related technologies. This is usually done through the Parent Association.
- Information is to be shared with parents, e.g. presentations at induction meetings for new pupils, open days or general meetings, discussion at parent teacher meetings, the school's information booklet, newsletter, website or email.
- The school supports parents with literacy problems by simplifying correspondence, offering assistance in completion of forms, liaising with the Parent Association as to difficulties and solutions.
- Parental involvement in the classroom in relation to Ethical Education is subject to approval by the Principal.

## 12. Community links

- Members of the community can be involved in supporting the *Learn Together* Programme e.g. the priest, the pastor, the Gardaí.
- Religious figures, local authority employees etc. (in particular, those of whom are parents, or live locally) are welcome to speak to the children.
- Children can interview local people as a basis for ethical projects/activities.

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### *Success criteria*

The criteria that will indicate success are: the implementation of the plan, the aims of the plan being achieved and the enhancement of pupils' learning.

- **How will we know that the plan has been implemented?**
  - Teachers' preparation based on this plan
  - Procedures outlined in this plan consistently followed

- **What indicators show that the aims have been achieved?**
    - Feedback from teachers/parents/pupils/community
    - Feedback from second level schools.
  
  - **How has the plan enhanced pupil learning?**
    - Children will have a knowledge and understanding of different value and belief systems in an atmosphere of critical inquiry and mutual respect
    - Children will be prepared to become caring members of a multicultural society with the necessary intercultural skills to enrich such a society
    - Children will address issues of spirituality and morality
    - Children will be given the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements
    - Children will be supported in cultivating their spirituality in a secure environment
    - Children's awareness of issues of human rights, justice and equality in society will be raised
    - Children will develop an ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment
    - Children will be provided with a range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens
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## *Implementation*

### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities**

Newtownmountkennedy ETNS believes that the school community must be involved to successfully implement Ethical Education. Therefore, the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Board of Management, Parents and the Local Community.

### **(b) Timeframe**

The plan will begin to be implemented in September 2019.

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## *Review*

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the Ethical Education curriculum in the school.

### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities**

Those involved in the review include:

- Teachers
- Pupils
- Parents
- Policy Committee Co-ordinator
- BOM
- DES

### **(b) Timeframe**

This plan will be reviewed in June 2020, or as deemed necessary.

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## *Ratification and communication*

The proposed plan will be communicated to members of the Board of Management prior to the meeting of the BOM in \_\_\_\_\_. Assuming it is ratified; parents will be made aware in the next newsletter that the plan is available for viewing by appointment in the school.

This plan was officially ratified by the BOM on \_\_\_\_\_.