



Monkstown Educate Together
National School

Monkstown Educate Together N.S. Ethical Curriculum Policy

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1. Introductory Statement and Rationale

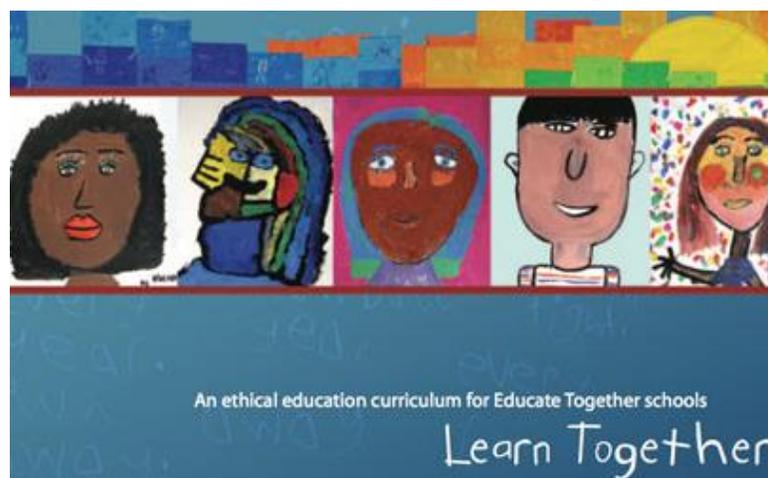
Ethical education is a process that continues throughout school life and, as such, is a shared responsibility between parents, staff and members of the school community. In our school the climate and atmosphere is central to the social and personal education of our children. Ethos is defined as the characteristic spirit of a community, as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations. Our characteristic spirit or ethos permeates every interaction, influences our decision making and guides our plans and policies. The ethos of our school impacts strongly on the kind of education delivered to our pupils through the values, attitudes and quality of relationships experienced daily. At METNS our ethos follows the four guiding principles of the Educate Together Charter:

- Child-centred
- Equality-based
- Co-educational
- Democratic

The characteristic spirit of our school is guided by these principles and is inspired by the vision statement: 'Learn Together to Live Together', which we have adopted. Our school mission statement reinforces this commitment.

1.1 Mission Statement:

Monkstown Educate Together strives to create a happy, safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where the uniqueness of each child is celebrated. We aim to provide a space where children are educated and where all members of the school community can grow, develop and achieve their full potential. We aspire to excellence in an atmosphere of respect, openness and joy.



The Learn Together ethical education curriculum is taught in place of religious instruction in our school. There are four strands in the Learn Together, detailed below. The ethical education curriculum can be described as follows:

- An education which helps learners to develop critical awareness and understanding of moral decision-making, and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral issues and standards.
- Ethical Education nurtures respect for a person's right to hold and practice religious and other beliefs. It involves an exploration of the infinite variety and richness of humankind, and the creation of intercultural spaces where values can be articulated and critically examined.
- Ethical Education focuses on questions of equality, justice, sustainability and active citizenship. It helps learners to develop spiritually and to think critically, and empowers them to make a difference.

We, as an active learning community, endorse the Learn Together Mission Statement:

To promote a philosophy of education in which no child is considered an outsider; which promotes the fullest development of ability irrespective of gender, class or stereotype and which encapsulates this ethos in a democratic partnership uniquely combining the involvement of parents with the professional role of teachers.

1.2 Rationale

The staff, parents and members of the Board of Management have devised this document in order to facilitate the development of the Ethical Curriculum within our school community. We have initially established a Curriculum Sub-Committee to draft documents and an Ethos Committee comprising of staff, parents and members of the BOM and PTA to support and develop our plan, to provide the necessary resources for same and to communicate its content and values to the school community.

We, at Monkstown Educate Together National School, believe it is important to distinguish the lived ethos (the atmosphere, relationships, culture and attitudes) from the taught ethos (ethical curriculum), while recognising that both aspects reinforce and support each other. Our values boards, ethos information boards and displays of children's work on all make our characteristic spirit visible in our school building. We recognise too the vital role played by our involvement in the Green Schools' movement, towards achieving our objectives and deepening our understanding of sustainable living. Our core curriculum is the Learn Together Curriculum. We believe that through teaching the strands and strand units of this curriculum, we provide children with learning opportunities through stories, classroom discussion, group work and educational activities, which contribute to their development emotionally, morally and socially. We aim to provide the children with these learning opportunities and to maximize active learning experiences and methodologies.

2. Vision and Aims

2.1 Vision

We seek to enable the children to

- Develop a sense of care and respect for self and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- Promote the well-being of the child and provide a holistic foundation for living
- Develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the value of democracy
- Enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world and its inhabitants

2.2 Aims

The Learn Together Curriculum aims to develop active global citizenship in our school community.

Within a safe environment we aim to foster self-esteem, empathy, personal and collective responsibility. **The foundation and core value of the ethical curriculum is respect.**

We endorse the four key aims of the Learn Together Curriculum

- To support the spiritual and moral development of the child
- To develop an ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment
- To foster knowledge, skills and understanding of belief systems and values in an atmosphere of critical inquiry and mutual respect
- To prepare children to become caring and responsible members of society

3. Content of the Plan

Our Learn Together Plan for METNS is a working document, where we list main guiding points under curriculum objectives. Our goal is to develop this plan through band-planning and consultation with partners and stakeholders, ultimately expanding it to include exemplars of teaching methodologies. This working document is attached to our policy statement. For clarification, a brief overview is provided below (See full document attached). The four complementary strands of the “Learn Together” document are as follows:

- Moral and Spiritual
- Equality and Justice
- Belief Systems
- Ethics and the Environment

We will plan our teaching of these four strands in a thematic spiral approach. The general aims of each strand unit are outlined below:

Strand 1: Moral & Spiritual

The general aim of the strand is to help develop in children a critical knowledge, understanding and awareness of right and wrong and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral standards through reflecting on the meaning and purposes of life. The strand should encourage and develop the individual on the journey to inner discovery and empower the child to make informed moral decisions.

Strand 2: Equality & Justice

The general aim of this strand is to develop in children a critical knowledge, understanding and awareness of issues relating to human rights, equality, culture and diversity, social justice and social inclusiveness and to empower them to make a difference.

Strand 3: Belief Systems

The general aim of this strand is to develop in children a critical knowledge, understanding and awareness of the teachings of religious and non-theistic belief systems and how these systems relate to our shared human experience. The emphasis will be placed on an exploration of the infinite variety and richness of humankind through nurturing a respect for a person's right to hold and practice individual belief systems and through creating spaces where values can be articulated and critically examined.

Strand 4: Ethics & the Environment

The aim of this strand is to develop in children knowledge, appreciation and respect for their environment and to empower them to take an active role in its stewardship.

4. School Context

Monkstown Educate Together National School is a multidenominational, co-educational vertical school set in an urban environment in South County Dublin. In 2015 the school completed the transition from an eight class to a sixteen class school. We operate under the patronage of the Dalkey School Project and as members of Educate Together.

The Ethical curriculum will be taught through a combination of contexts in our school:

- Positive school climate
- Discrete core curriculum teaching
- Integration with other curricular areas

4.1 Positive School Climate

We strive to make the lived ethos visible within our school by:

- Building effective communication within the school
- Developing appropriate communication between home and school via the school website, notice boards, written word, ethos information sharing on Open Days and through homework
- Fostering awareness of core values and practicing same through the Value of the Month yearly programme
- Being inclusive and respectful of individual needs
- Celebrating diversity
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language
- Developing the democratic processes – empowerment of children via the Student Council and Green Team; parents and staff working together on the Ethos Committee

4.2 Discrete Core Curriculum Teaching

We have allocated 2 hours 30 minutes of discrete time for teaching of the Learn Together (LT) programme per week as per Department of Education guidelines. This is inclusive of fortnightly assembly (alternating junior and senior) and activities with buddies.

4.3 Integration

Our ethos permeates everything we do within the school. Teaching across the curriculum reflects this. The Learn Together curriculum and other subject areas have much in common. Therefore our ethos can be taught in an integrated way. Core curriculum objectives in the LT programme can be extended through other subjects such as English, SESE, SPHE, Visual Arts, Drama, Music and PE.

5. Approaches and Methodologies

Ethical Curriculum will be taught in the school:

- In the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- Through discrete teaching of the Learn Together curriculum
- On an integrated, cross curricular basis
- At assembly (generally alternating weekly for senior & junior classes with some whole-school assemblies timetabled)
- Parallel with a yearly programme to facilitate parental involvement promoted by a school-wide Ethos Committee

Active Learning is a key principal of the overall curriculum and is the principal learning and teaching approach. We will promote the following active learning strategies:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom talk and discussion
- Group work – including independent project work
- Buddy-Paired Programme for band 1 & 4
- Circle Time
- Games
- Art activities
- Quiet time
- A guest speaker to the classroom/ school assemblies
- Educational videos
- Educational drama
- Communication technologies & research tools
- Written activities
- Debates

We aim to involve the children in their own learning through the following methodologies:

- Active learning
- Talk and discussion
- Skills through content
- Collaborative learning
- Problem solving
- Use of the environment
- ICT

6. Assessment

The Ethical Curriculum will be assessed through:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks
- Participation - active citizenship, democratic structures, school events, class work
- Portfolios, projects, artwork, displays etc.
- Conferencing with children on progress
- Child-led assessment and evaluation

7. Equality of Participation and Access

Where possible, children will not be withdrawn for supplementary teaching while the LT curriculum is being taught. In order to address individual learning needs, the following strategies will be employed:

- Vocabulary and context for activities will be provided for children with extra needs
- Scaffolding for individual and project work will be provided as necessary
- Differentiated learning materials will be provided as required
- Methodologies will vary to accommodate different learning styles
- Children will participate in mixed-ability groups, engage in pair work and benefit from peer support.

8. Policies and Programmes that Support The Ethical Curriculum

The following policies related to the Ethical Curriculum have been drawn up in consultation with the staff, the parents and the Board of Management.

These are relevant to The Ethical Curriculum and will inform our teaching

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Communications Policy
- Special Education Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Parental-Involvement Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

9. Resources

The core resources for all levels are available in the school. It is a goal of the school community to develop a substantial resource bank which will be available for all levels. The Board of Management have allocated funds for this. Guest Speakers relating to all of the four curricular strands will be invited to speak to teachers, parents and children. The Principal, the ethical curriculum post holder and the Ethos Committee will co-ordinate this.

10. Individual Teacher Planning and Cuntas Mhíosula

The Ethical Curriculum Policy and the whole school plan will outline the curriculum content and structure that the staff will follow in addition to the aims and objectives of the LT guidelines. While these documents form a basis for planning, it is important to acknowledge that it may be necessary to adapt the plan to suit individual classes and their experiences. Teachers will record taught content of the LT curriculum in the cuntas míosúil.

11. Staff Development

Staff will be kept informed of related courses, materials and websites by the ethical curriculum coordinator. The school has resources and we aim to build on these resources to aid staff in the implementation of this curriculum. If the need arises we will request an in-service day in this area from the national organisation. There is also a range of in-service courses available on-line (details available at educatetogether.ie). Funding is available on application by the staff to the BOM through the Staff Development Fund for attending extra courses and staff who attend courses will be encouraged to give feedback to all staff.

12. Parental Involvement

As the primary educators of their children, we encourage parents and guardians to engage with their children in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes around the four strands. As partners in the education process, we invite them to formally endorse the Learn Together curriculum. Each strand lends itself to the involvement of parents and guardians and the individual teacher will decide the best way of making this involvement a positive experience for all concerned.

A designated Ethos Day will be held each year to which parents and guardians will be invited to view their children's work. Individual classroom visits will be organised at the discretion of the class teacher. Examples of ethical curriculum work will be shared in the form of homework at regular intervals.

The mandate of the Ethos Committee is to develop and progress action plans, the goals of which have been determined by the ethos self evaluation report, school staff and the Board of Management. Part of this mandate will be to inform, consult and actively involve parents in issues related to ethos, both lived and taught. Please see the BOM approved charter for the METNS Ethos Committee attached (Appendix 2).

13. Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be determined through consultation with staff, parents, children, Ethos Committee and the Board of Management. This policy will be subject to a biennial review and such a review will take into consideration any guidelines, plans and frameworks coming from the national office.

14. Implementation

14.1 Roles and Responsibilities

This plan will be supported, developed and implemented by the Ethical Curriculum sub-committee with the support of the whole staff, parents, Ethos Committee and the BOM.

14.2 Timeframe

The Ethical Curriculum Policy will be reviewed and up-dated every two years. The Learn Together Plan which forms part of this policy will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. The Ethical Curriculum policy and plan will be implemented in the school year 2015/2016.

15. Review

The plan will be reviewed by the ethical curriculum coordinator, Ethical Curriculum Sub-Committee and whole staff on a continuous basis.

16. Ratification

The Ethical Curriculum Policy was ratified on _____ by the Board of Management and will be available with other school plans and policies.

Signed

Chairperson Board of Management

Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

