

Learn Together Policy

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Introductory Statement:

This policy was drafted by the Learn Together curriculum group in December 2022. This plan is a record of our decisions regarding Learn Together and it reflects the Educate Together Charter, 1999. This charter affirms that children of all social, cultural, religious and non-denominational backgrounds have a right to an education that reflects their individual identity while exploring the different value and traditions in the world in which they live. The four key principles outlined in this charter are to guide the delivery of an ethical education curriculum in our school and inform our culture and ethos. DPETNS operates in line with the four principles of the Educate Together charter: Equality-based - Democratically run - Co-educational - Child-centred. The policy is intended to guide teachers in their individual planning for Learn Together.

Rationale:

Educate Together recognises the need to develop a curricular programme which focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of children in an inclusive school setting. It also recognises the unique nature of each child and endeavours to ensure that "No Child is an Outsider" through the implementation of an ethos that recognises different religious and cultural identities. The ethical education curriculum celebrates difference and provides the knowledge, skills and attitudes that children need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and live in a society that embraces diversity.

Vision:

The commitment to the four key principles of Educate Together is encapsulated in the motto "Learn Together to Live Together". DPETNS is committed to this motto through the ethos, the stated values, and the day-to-day relationship both within the school and with the community. The school's educational philosophy identifies the importance of an inclusive ethos and affords the opportunity to embrace the

reality of what it means to live out the ideal of learning together to live together. DPETNS also greatly values the importance of empathy in developing understanding and respect. Therefore, the 'golden rule' of "Treat others as you would like to be treated" is promoted alongside the Educate Together motto.

Aims:

- To foster in each child a knowledge and understanding of different values and belief systems in an atmosphere of critical enquiry and mutual respect.
- To prepare children to become caring members of a multicultural society with the necessary intercultural skills to enrich such a society.
- To address issues of spirituality and morality.
- To facilitate in children the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements.
- To support children in cultivating their spirituality in a secure environment.
- To raise awareness in children of issues of human rights, justice and equality in society.
- To develop in children an ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment
 - To encourage a range of dispositions and skills to enable students to participate in and contribute to the democratic process.
 - To foster an interest in becoming informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens.
- To encourage each child to explore and reflect on their experiences
- To develop in each child qualities such as courage, respect, tolerance, responsibility, integrity and trust.
- To foster empathy and concern for people who are excluded, vulnerable, marginalised or with a disability both in school and in the wider community

- To teach children to critically and constructively reflect on the means used in the wider world to influence and shape their values, attitudes and beliefs - such as the media, advertising and peer pressure.

Curriculum Planning:

1. Strands and Strands Units

The Learn Together curriculum is divided into four strands as recommended in the Educate Together Ethical Education Curriculum 2004. These four strands that underpin the delivery of the Educate Together ethos are:

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

The Learn Together curriculum 2022 will be launched in May 2023. In the revised curriculum the strands names will change to An Ethical Approach to the Environment, Values and Ethical Perspectives, Belief Systems and Equality and Justice.

This is to promote a **theme-based** approach to the curriculum in Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The curriculum is designed to be a spiral in nature. As they progress through school, children will experience opportunities to refine and develop their skills, abilities, knowledge and appreciation in each strand. The strand and strand units for each class group are set out in the curriculum document.

2. Approaches and Methodologies:

D.P.E.T.N.S. encourages the use of the following approaches and methodologies:

- Direct teaching approach
- Guided discovery approach
- Integration

We will use a variety of methods to encourage maximum participation by the child including:

- Teamwork
- Individual work
- Paired work
- Hot seating
- Role-play
- Circle Time
- Co-operative games
- Kinesthetic learning activities
- Classroom discussion
- Audio-visual material

3. Assessment and record keeping:

- Teachers will use a wide range of assessment methodologies in order to ensure that the concepts have been clearly understood and that learning has taken place.
- Oral work, written work, project work
- Teacher observation during classroom discussions, group work, role-play and cooperative activities.
- Exploration of attitudes and the link between attitudes and actions
- Portfolio of children's work
- Teacher designed tasks

4. Children with different needs:

- It is the policy of our school that all children will participate in Learn Together lessons and activities. Learn Together will be differentiated in order to meet the needs of the children in a particular class.

- Every attempt, with the valued assistance of additional staff (S.N.A.s/Resource teacher) will be made to ensure that all children experience the richness of a full Learn Together curriculum.

5. Equality of participation and access:

- In line with Educate Together policy, equal opportunities will be afforded to all children regardless of gender, ethnic background, and socio-economic status across all strands and activities.

6. Linkage and integration:

Every attempt will be made to link the various strands of Learn Together across the curriculum.

Organisational Planning

7. Current practice in our school

- All teachers have access to the Learn Together Curriculum online and Learn Together appears as an item on staff meeting agendas
- Broad topics are suggested which class teachers can then deliver at an age-appropriate level. Topics are often guided by our Learn Together calendar, which can be found in the curricular policy section of our school website.
- Two and a half hours each week are designated as Learn Together time. Assembly and Golden Time are included in this allocation.
- Assembly topics have a theme linked with the Learn Together curriculum. Teachers leading assembly bring topics/issues to the children's attention with a focus on one of the four strands of the Learn Together curriculum
- In order to promote the Democratic Process, children are elected by their peers onto the Green School Committee and the Student Council. Students can be asked for their feedback through surveys about potential improvements in the day-to-

day running of the school. These surveys are often run by or created with the help of the Student Council.

- From First Class upwards, the children have a Learn Together copybook. We share what we are learning through communication with parents via social media, homework, website and copies.
- Learn Together books and resources belonging to the school are kept in the central resource area and on our drive.
- DPETNS makes a clear distinction between religious education and religious instruction. Religious instruction which focuses children on one single religion and fosters a commitment to that religion is the responsibility of the child's parents or guardians. Religious instruction classes can be organised by parents and should be held outside school hours. They do not form part of the school programme. In the Learn Together strand called Belief Systems, the programme explains and explores the major belief systems in the world in an educational manner, teaching children about these faiths and beliefs without endorsing any particular one as religious truth. The educational aim of this work is to model positive information about world faiths in a respectful atmosphere which highlights rights and responsibilities.

8. Promoting an Intercultural School

- DPETNS uses visual aids, posters and displays in our classrooms and in the public areas in the school to promote the Educate Together ethos
- Every family will be asked to fill in a form (optional) outlining their family's country of origin and other culturally related issues.
- A map of the world is displayed in the school showing the various different countries represented in our school community.
- Simple phrases such as 'Hello' or 'Welcome' will be displayed in different languages on classroom doors. We also promote International Languages Day in our school.
- DPETNS is an anti-racist school. This means that we foster a strong sense of Equality and Justice in our students and encourage them to speak up against racism, rather than solely focusing on their own behaviours.

- DPETNS values global citizenship and promotes both local and world-wide perspectives when addressing human rights issues. One way we encourage connections between our students and the wider world is through our partnership with an NGO in Cambodia called PEPY Empowering Youth. More information about our partnership can be found on our school website.

9. Individual teachers' planning and reporting:

- Individual teachers will create a Learn Together plan for their own class, which should be spiral in nature.
- Teachers are encouraged to refer to their Cúntas Míosúil (Monthly Reports) to ensure all relevant strands and strand units have been covered.

10. Staff development:

Staff needs will be assessed regularly and relevant organisations, local community groups and the appropriate education centres will be accessed to provide ongoing training as the need arises. Details of courses and training days relevant to Learn Together will be displayed on the staffroom noticeboard and staff will be encouraged to attend. Teachers will familiarise themselves with the Intercultural Guidelines. Staff will be encouraged to join our Learn Together Team if they wish to become more involved in the implementation of our school ethos.

11. Parental involvement:

Parents who are willing to be involved in activities in the school will always be welcomed by the staff of D.P.E.T.N.S. where possible and appropriate. The school recognises parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children. They will be encouraged to engage with their children in developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes around the four strands of the Learn Together curriculum. Parents are updated on the Learn Together programme through communication in a number of ways; children's copies, website/blog, Home-School Links and notice boards.

12. Community links:

The school patron, Educate Together, and the Board of Management are committed to work in such a way as to embrace the input of parents, teachers, children and members of the community and to enable the highest level of participation and partnership. DPETNS endeavours to maintain strong links with fellow Educate Together schools in the Fingal area and the rest of the sector. DPETNS participates in cluster meetings and regularly sends representatives to the annual Educate Together Ethical Conference to gather and share ideas.

Success criteria

The success of this school plan will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Teachers' preparation has been based on this plan
- Procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. The success of this plan in achieving the aims will be assessed by:
 - Teacher feedback
 - Children's feedback
 - Parental feedback
 - Board of management feedback

Implementation

- The post holder for Learn Together will be responsible for overall development of the Learn Together curriculum. The post holder will work with the curricular team on Learn Together development in the school. The team will liaise with others within the school community on the matter of Learn Together. They will also be responsible for all resources and timetables.
- The staff will evaluate the progress in Learn Together by referring to our set of stated objectives as outlined in this plan.

Ratification and Communication

- On ratification of this plan by the staff and Board of Management this plan will be communicated to all teachers through distribution and will become part of the Plean Scoile.