



Learn Together Curriculum Plan

This curriculum plan was developed by the staff to provide guidance for all teachers and to ensure whole-school collaboration regarding the Learn Together Curriculum.

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1. Introductory Statement

This Learn Together Curriculum Plan was developed by staff members in order to support teachers with planning, delivery and evaluation ethical education lessons in our learning community. As the school is developing, currently with classes only up to second class, the plan is a work-in-progress and will be adapted and modified regularly as the school grows.

2. Rationale

As an Educate Together national school, the teaching of the Learn Together curriculum is a key aspect of the school's ethos. The Learn Together Curriculum is to be delivered in discrete lessons, but the objectives will influence all aspects of teaching and learning in our school and inform teaching and learning in all subjects across the primary school curriculum.

3. Vision

Recalling the school's ethos that strives to build a child-centred school community which values inclusion, diversity and the unique talents of all, the Learn Together Curriculum is an integral aspect of our school's identity. The curriculum objectives endeavour to provide a well-rounded educational experience by cultivating an awareness and respect for difference while activating the pupils of the school as young citizens who recognise their potential contributions to their community through application of a shared set of values based on fairness and equality.

4. Aims

- To provide opportunities for children to become aware of different belief perspectives while also being given space to share their own backgrounds with their peers in a collaborative learning environment.
- To consider contemporary issues of local, national and global importance in the context of various perspectives.
- To ensure children develop an appreciation for natural environments.
- To support pupils to practise democracy in an age-appropriate manner to shape the school community.
- To use discussion, reflective writing and other expressive activities to help children develop a sense of self as well as an understanding of a shared responsibility to others.
- To engage pupils in an active and well-rounded consideration of others experiences while also striving towards developing a shared set of values related to justice, fairness and equality.
- To help children develop ways to exercise their voice and be empowered as active citizens.
- To provide opportunities for self-reflection and personal development.
- To use meditation, mindfulness, shared reflective practices and personal introspection to create a calm, cohesive learning community.

5. Approaches, Methodologies and Content

The Learn Together Curriculum has four strand units. In addition to discrete Learn Together lessons outlined below, it is envisioned that the Curriculum objectives will inform a variety of decisions and practices in the school.

5.1 Belief Systems

Lessons focused on various belief systems are organised in a spiral manner. Six major belief systems (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism) as well as atheism, agnosticism and humanism are addressed. Belief systems represented in the school community are given particular importance, and children and parents are given opportunities to share their beliefs with the school community. Celebrations are discussed in a biennial, whole-school manner. The plan below ensures that the examination of belief systems is balanced and comprehensive. As the plan is cumulative and spiralled, information presented in

previous years is reviewed and built upon. The plan is designed to ensure collaboration within year groups and is delivered in a two-year rotation.

| | Junior Infants | 1 st Class | 3 rd Class | 5 th Class |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Celebrations | Eid al-Adha Easter Charles Darwin Day | Guru Nanak's Birthday Wesak | | Holi Yom Kippur |
| Rites and Ceremonies | | <u>Naming Ceremonies</u> Aqiqah (Islam) Family Study – name origins | <u>Pilgrimages, Weddings and Funerals</u> Christianity Islam Buddhism | <u>Coming-of-age Ceremonies</u> Khatam al-Koran (Islam in Malaysia) Humanist and cultural traditions |
| Key Figures | <u>Stories of Key Figures</u> Buddha Muhammad Charles Darwin Guru Nanak | <u>Leaders</u> Imam Buddhist priest | <u>Special Texts</u> Bible Qu'ran | <u>Symbols and Buildings</u> Islamic art Mandala (Buddhism) Buddhist temple Protestant church Mosque |
| Beliefs and Values | | <u>Rituals</u> Prayer (Islam) Bows (Buddhism) Time in nature (Humanism) | <u>Codes of Conduct</u> 8 tenets (Buddhism) 5 pillars (Islam) | <u>Links</u> Monotheism, Atheism and Polytheism <u>Visiting Places of Worship</u> Church of Ireland (St Nicholas) Mosque |

| | Senior Infants | 2 nd Class | 4 th Class | 6 th Class |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Celebrations | Paryushana Christmas Lent | Diwali Nirvana Day Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr | | Winter Solstice Passover |
| Rites and Ceremonies | | <u>Naming Ceremonies</u> Christening/Baptism (Christianity) Namrakan (Hinduism) | <u>Pilgrimages, Weddings and Funerals</u> Humanist Judaism Hinduism | <u>Coming-of-age Ceremonies</u> Confirmation (Christianity) Thread Ceremony (Hinduism) Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Judaism) |
| Key Figures | <u>Stories of Key Figures</u> Jesus Moses Rama and Sita | <u>Leaders</u> Priests and rectors (Christianity) Pandits (Hinduism) Rabbis (Judaism) | <u>Special Texts</u> The Torah (Judaism) Hindu texts | <u>Symbols and Buildings</u> Star of David (Judaism) Mandala (Buddhism) Om (Hinduism) Synagogue Catholic church Hindu and Jain mandirs |
| Beliefs and Values | | <u>Rituals</u> Eucharist (Christianity) Ramadan Fasting (Islam) Sabbath (Judaism) | <u>Codes of Conduct</u> 10 Commandments (Judaism and Christianity) Secular moral codes | <u>Links</u> Understanding denominations and sects <u>Visiting Places of Worship</u> Synagogue Catholic cathedral |

Resources for the Belief Systems Strand can be found in a number of places including using the growing collection of print materials in the school as well as the Learn Together Resource Bank (<http://lt.educatetogether.com/>). Also, careful selection of videos as well as visits by members of different belief systems and excursions to places of worship are valuable first-hand resources. Teachers must view the

videos or discuss topics of conversation in advance to ensure the educational purpose remains solely to inform children about others’ beliefs and practices.

5.2 Equality and Justice

Key concepts related to justice and fairness will be integrated across the curriculum as they inform curriculum choices. Reading materials for English will often be chosen for their linkage to human rights and equality themes and to ensure a range of cultural and identity representations. Anti-bias teaching is essential to promote a child-centred learning atmosphere where all children perceive themselves as valued and represented in the teaching and learning activities. A human-rights lens will inform the teaching of history and geography. Similarly, the other subjects in the curriculum will be influenced by a lens of inclusion.

Discrete lessons related to equality and justice will be taught and directed by the objectives at each class level. The following key concepts and topics will be addressed in each year group, with a spiral approach presenting each topic in an age-appropriate manner. These will be discussed in the context of the International Convention on Human Rights and Irish equality legislation (Equal Status Act).

| Junior Infants & Third Class | Senior Infants & Fourth Class | First Class & Fifth Class | Second Class & Sixth Class |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Family diversity Anti-racism Gender | Refugees Disability awareness Child labour | Homelessness Refugees Language Awareness | Fair Trade Poverty Travellers |

In addition, each class will focus on learning, in an in-depth manner, about three people (as well as others) who have made a difference by promoting equality and justice:

| Junior Infants | Senior Infants | First Class | Second Class |
|---|--|---|--|
| Martin Luther King, Jr. Patsy Mink Ruby Bridges | Nkosi Johnson Cesar Chavez Cristina Noble | Emily Pankhurst Samantha Smith Jesse Owens | Nan Joyce Mother Jones Jane Goodall |
| Third Class | Fourth Class | Fifth Class | Sixth Class |
| Mary Robinson Dr B.R. Ambedakar Nelson Mandela | Helen Keller Greta Thunberg Mahatma Gandhi | Constance Markievicz Daniel O’Connell Frederick Douglas | Harvey Milk Malala Yousafzai Betty Williams & Mairéad Corrigan |

Activating children towards working for equality and justice will be linked to the above-named themes and other pertinent current issues. Examples, from an age-appropriate manner, of actions to support equality and justice will include the following:

- Writing letters
- Creating posters
- Informing other classes and parents
- Participating in campaigns at the national and international level
- Organising fundraisers
- Participating in community projects
- Engaging with community leaders and politicians

Providing space and recognition for the child’s voice is an essential component of the Educate Together ethos. Democracy in action requires involving children in decision-making in an age-appropriate manner. This includes being involved in determining rules and procedures, having a say in determining learning activities and speaking out about what they’d like to see changed in the school. In addition to classroom-based decisions, children participate in a number of school-wide committees including Student Council, Active School, Green School, Creative Schools and Gaelbhreach. Learning about democratic processes is an

essential part of this, as children make decisions in a manner that mirrors democratic decision-making in the community including understanding the PR-STV voting system. Discussions about important elections in an age-appropriate manner, particularly constitutional referenda, are valuable.

5.3 Moral and Spiritual Development

The core of the teaching of moral development will be evident in the day-to-day interactions between children, staff and parents. The staff will actively use a moral lens to address conflict between pupils. This is grounded in a restorative practice approach where time is granted for the sharing of feelings, the recognition of how actions have affected others and the regular, ongoing restoration of relationships.

In addition, regular discreet lessons, with strong linkages to the SPHE curriculum, will focus on understanding and promoting core values such as honesty, fairness and kindness. The key resource for these lessons is *Values Education*, with a book for children and a teacher's handbook for each class level.

Opportunities for silent reflection, mindfulness and various forms of meditative practice will be used in all classrooms. In addition, self-reflection will be explored in a number of ways to promote self-awareness and self-belief. This includes expressive activities in the visual arts and writing. Personal goal-setting, self-assessment and celebration of personal achievements will be used throughout the school.

In addition, a focus on Wellbeing is being introduced to the school. The first programme, Weaving Well Being, was introduced from 2nd class and up beginning in 2019. The Mind Up programme will start to be introduced from September 2021. In addition, a number of wellbeing activities are introduced as described in the SPHE Curriculum Plan.

5.4 Ethics and the Environment

Environmental Awareness is promoted across the curriculum. Discrete lessons are taught related to understanding humans impact on the environment.

Respect for and appreciation of nature is an integral part of the curriculum, with important overlaps with the Science and Geography curricula. Regular visits to nearby habitats, both to learn about them as well as appreciate their aesthetic beauty, take place in all classes, particularly Barna Woods, Rusheen Bay and Silverstrand. Artistic expression linked to these environments is a key component of developing this appreciation.

The Green Flag programme provides an excellent framework for addressing environmental awareness and activism. In addition to the annual Action Days, each class has discrete lessons to learn about key environmental issues including waste management, energy use, water consumption, recycling, composting, habitat protection, climate change, transport and biodiversity. The school will soon apply for the first Green Flag in Waste Management. Practical actions will be implemented both in school and at home demonstrating a commitment to sustainability.

In a similar way to the Equality and Justice Strand, such topics will be introduced across the curriculum, informing particularly the teaching of English, Geography and Science. Equally, the same types of activism will be used to advocate for understanding and influencing human decisions related to the environment.

6. Timetabling

Timetabling for the Learn Together will follow the guidelines which earmarks 30 minutes per day for religious education as determined by the patron. As an Educate Together school, there is significant overlap between the SPHE and Learn Together Curriculums. More importantly, the objectives of Learn Together are addressed in an interdisciplinary manner, permeating the entire curriculum and influencing both formal teaching and the

“hidden curriculum” through the application of school policies and procedures. Therefore, while designative time for discrete Learn Together lessons will be present on timetables, the curriculum is addressed in a wide-ranging and diffused manner.

7. Homework

Discrete homework is not typically assigned for the Learn Together Curriculum, though occasionally, projects involving discussion or activities to be completed related to understanding families’ experiences and beliefs may be included in homework.

8. Digital Learning

Teachers are encouraged to source and use a variety of digital learning resources to supplement discussion and project-based lessons. Only materials that have been assessed prior to the lesson for suitability will be used. One useful source is the Learn Together online database which collates resources for teachers related to the strand units.

9. Teacher’s Planning and Reporting

All teachers will develop yearly and fortnightly/weekly schemes that are based on the objectives of the Learn Together Curriculum. These plans will not only indicate discrete Learn Together lessons and activities but also show the connections between Learn Together and the wider curriculum. Cuntaisí míosúla will also indicate the types of Learn Together lessons and activities completed over the period. These cuntaisí will be reviewed by the principal and stored for a two-year period.

10. Assessment

While formal assessment does not regularly feature in relation to the Learn Together Curriculum, a variety of methods are used to assess related knowledge. At the heart of ongoing assessment is observation, particularly as much of the Learn Together curriculum seeks to promote attitudes and aptitudes rather than purely cognitive knowledge. Of particular importance, the use of reflective portfolios is an essential assessment activity. On occasion, teacher-created and directed assessment may be used to formally monitor students’ mastery of specific content.

11. Equality of Participation/Access

We are committed to the provision of equal opportunities for all our pupils in the implementation of the Learn Together Curriculum. At its heart, the curriculum seeks to build awareness of self and others and to foster an atmosphere and respect in every lesson and activity taking place in the school. Equal opportunities are provided to all pupils to participate in discussions, debates, reading and writing opportunities. Lessons should be designed to support children in sharing their personal background, experiences and opinions. The school supports an anti-bias approach by recognising and celebrating difference and addressing discrimination related to the nine grounds specified in the Equal Status Act, and this informs all lessons.

12. Children with Exceptional Ability and with Special Educational Needs

As much of the Learn Together curriculum is focused on personal awareness and understanding, teaching approaches will naturally allow children to engage with the ideas and concepts according to their ability. Children with exceptional ability will be able to make contributions to discussions that reflect their skills and knowledge. Equally, children with learning difficulties, language learning needs and special educational needs are helped to achieve their potential by receiving suitable supports to help them engage meaningfully in lessons.

13. Continuing Professional Development

Teachers are encouraged to avail of suitable professional development experiences. Teachers are encouraged and supported financially to attend the annual Educate Together Ethical Education Conference, depending on interest among staff members and budget conditions. If new teachers have not completed an online course about the Learn Together Curriculum before being hired, they are actively encouraged to complete one. A particular focus will be on ensuring a uniform approach to implementing the Learn Together curriculum as well as careful attention to ensure that the school climate is safe, welcoming and conducive to learning for all. Teachers are encouraged to share resources, lessons and ideas with one another as often as possible.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for implementing, supporting and evaluating this Curriculum plan rests with the principal as supported by the In-school Management Team. In addition, all class teachers are responsible for becoming familiar with and applying this plan when completing long- and short-term plans.

15. Review

The plan will be reviewed by the staff and amended as required, and it will be reviewed formally no later than 2024.

16. Ratification and Communication

This Learn Together Curriculum Plan was ratified by the Board of Management as indicated below. It is included in An Plean Scoile. The plan is distributed electronically to all teachers and a hard copy is kept in the office.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 26/05/2021