

Dear Parent,

We would like to welcome your children to the multi-denominational lessons that will commence on the 17th of September. These lessons will take place once a week, on Wednesdays from 09:20 to 10:40.

These lessons will continue to be based on the “Learn Together” curriculum of the Educate Together Schools. Learn Together, is an ethical education curriculum taught in Educate Together schools in place of formal religious instruction. There are four strands in this curriculum as follows: (www.educatetogether.ie)

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 a knowledge, appreciation and respect for their environment and to empower them to take an active role in its stewardship.

This year we will endeavor to cover all of the above strands and will keep you informed of what the children are learning throughout the school year.

To strengthen the delivery of this curriculum the classes will be separated into two groups as follows:

Junior cycle from: Naíonáin Bheaga - Rang 1, will be taught by Aisling.

Senior cycle from: Rang 2 – Rang 6, will be taught by Joanne & Suzanne.

In addition, we would welcome input from parents and invite you all to share any knowledge you might have about a specific belief system or other aspect of this curriculum. In this way we can work together to educate our children, to empower them and to make them socially aware of the world around them.

Best regards,

Aisling Ní Néill, Joanne Uí Threasaigh & Suzanne O'Connor

Téarma 1

Teaching:

We plan to make these lessons as interactive as possible and to have the children as active participants in their learning. This will involve, discussion, circle time, drama, art & craft, games, stories and songs. By using these methods we hope to make the lessons an enjoyable experience for the children. This year, the older children may be asked to research topics for the “Belief Systems” set of lessons so that we can discuss them during the class.

All classes will endeavor to follow the same themes throughout the year but may differ slightly due to age appropriateness. The schedule of lessons can be found on the school’s website (www.gaelscoil.net) but below are the themes to be covered in the first term:

Féiniúlacht (Identity):

Moral and Spiritual & Equality and Justice

Exploring Moral Development & Exploring Human Rights & Promoting Equality

Through this set of lessons we hope to instill a sense of identity in each child so that they can:

- Be comfortable with themselves
- Understand that we are all different from each other.
- Begin to explore the concept of discrimination and prejudice.
- Examine their role in the school community.

Each child will start a booklet and we will add to it throughout the year so that you can keep up to date with what they are doing.

Belief Systems:

As we covered aspects of the main religious beliefs last year, this year we will be looking at the history of religion, starting with a look at some ancient religious practices. The lessons will begin with the Aboriginal Religion, as its roots stretch back between 40,000 & 60,000 years. Thereafter, we will examine Ancient Egyptian beliefs.

In addition we will be taking a brief look at some winter celebrations including: Halloween, Hanukkah and the Winter Solstice.

Ethics & the Environment

The first term will cover the following topics:

- World Food Day: examining ethical issues such as food waste and the 2014 theme: *Family Farming: Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth*
- Autumn: Taking a look at the changes that occur at this time of year and also incorporating Tree Day 2014
- Winter: examining the changes to the environment during the winter and its effects on habitats.