

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
An introduction by our Principal	4
An introduction to the life and ethos of our school	6

Part One: THE PILLARS OF OUR ETHOS

1. We are child-centred

- Definition 8
- Positive illustrations of child-centred practice
 - (a) Within our classrooms 8
 - (b) In our broader school life 9
 - (c) Our after-school activities and clubs 9
 - (d) Our child-centred policies 10
 - (e) Child-centred formal practices 10
 - (f) Maximizing our ability to meet the needs of all children 10
- Challenges in being child-centred 10
- Flowchart “How to raise a child related issue” 11

2. We are multi-denominational

- Definition 12
- Positive illustrations of our multi-denominational principle and Ethical Core Curriculum
 - (a) Moral & spiritual development 12
 - (b) Equality and justice 13
 - (c) Ethics and the environment 13
 - (d) Belief systems and religions 13
- Challenges in being multi-denominational and multicultural 14
- Map showing the many cultures represented in LETNS 16

3. We are democratic

- Definition 18
- Positive illustrations of democratic practice
 - (a) In our classrooms 18
 - (b) School discipline 19
 - (c) Student Council 19
 - (d) Executive Committee 18
 - (e) Board of Management (BOM) 19
 - (f) Parent Teacher Association (PTA) 20
 - (g) Ethos group 20
 - (h) Fundraising 20
 - (i) Principle of receptiveness to varying opinions and commitment to conflict resolution 21
- Flowchart “How to raise a general school issue” 21
- Challenges in being democratic 22

4. We are co-educational

- Definition 23
- Positive illustrations of co-educational practice
 - (a) Within our classrooms 23
 - (b) In our broader school life 23
- Challenges implementing the co-educational principle 24

Part Two: OUR POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Outreach classes	25
Parental involvement	26
Volunteer Policy	29
Anti-bullying policy	30
Healthy Eating policy	32
Discipline policy	33
Learning support policy	34
Enrolment Policy	35
Dress code for children and staff	36



Acknowledgements

Our Ethos guide has been enriched by many people – we have used contributions from all who participated at different stages; from those who came to share their opinions at one of our various ethos discussion meetings, to those who contributed by e-mail, to those who took part in the final editing and design of our guide.



We would also like to extend a warm thank you to our families for their patience and support during this process: Go raibh maith agaibh, Thank you, Gracias, Merci, Danke, Spasibo, Efharisto, Shukran, Arigato, Ah Dios mamexas, Ghu long khu me ah, XieXie, Mgoi, Na gode, E se e'....

1st phase (June 03–June 04)

DISCUSSING, DEFINING AND ILLUSTRATING THE PILLARS OF OUR ETHOS

Thanks for your input and lively debating at our ethos group meetings:

Sobia Asif, Trish Duffy, Philip Devereux, Barbara Hayes, Denise Foran, Andrea Parkinson, Mary T Kenny, Wynn Nelson, Aisling McMahon, Triona Leonard, Frances Finn, Helena Thompson, Lisa Forde, Jenny Allis, Michele Mooney, Leigh Carran, Mike Greally, Deirdre Irwin, Laura Byrne, Rachel Cullivan, Sarah Parlane, Carole Lakes, Nora Neville, Sandra Murray, Susan Medcalf, Julie-Ann Stevens, Gabriel MacGrath, Helena Murphy, Carmel Donnelly, Mary Tuohy, Louisa Daly, Yvonne Mangan, Ann

Hayes, Elaine Finn, Marja Van Zetten, Roseanne Lynch and Karla Medina-McNamara.

2nd phase (Sept. 04–June 05)

EDITING AND EXPANDING OUR FOUR PILLARS AND POLICIES

Thanks for your sense of justice, stamina and hard work:

ETHOS GUIDE PROJECT GROUP (developing the four pillars): Wynn Nelson, Karla Medina-McNamara, Sarah Parlane, Mary T Kenny, Chris Mullan, Mike Greally, Aisling McMahon.

EDUCATIONAL INPUT: Mary Tuohy and Yvonne Mangan.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

Ian Scott, David Kent, Ciaran Tierney, Louisa Daly, Fergal McNamara, Helena Murphy, Damian O'Connor, Veronica Munroe.

FEEDBACK AND EDITING SUGGESTIONS: Adrian O'Byrne, Helena Murphy, Trish Duffy, Niall McElwee.

3rd phase (up to publication, October 05)

BRINGING OUR GUIDE TO REALITY

Thanks for your expertise, efficiency and generosity:

SECRETARY OF ETHOS MEETINGS AND GUIDE PROJECT MANAGER: Karla Medina-McNamara.



CHAIR OF ETHOS MEETINGS, GUIDE EDITING AND STRUCTURING: Aisling McMahon.

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PRINTING: Sandy Duffy and Dave McKane of DVD Design.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Patrick Kavanagh, Roseanne Lynch, Dave McKane and Cathy Weatherston.

COVER DESIGN: Dave McKane and Sandy Duffy, including oil pastels by the children in Adrian O'Byrne's 3rd class, 2005, illustrating "How our school is special", under the guidance of Roseanne Lynch, artist in residence.



An introduction by our principal

Lucan Educate Together N.S. has come a long way from its humble beginnings to the school community and building of today. The publication of this guide on our ethos is one more sign of the dynamism and commitment that has been part of our identity since the very beginning. The need to have a comprehensive document that informs about the life and ethos of our school has emerged continuously in the many ethos meetings held since 2003. I wish to express my thanks to all who have contributed their time and energy over two years in bringing this guide to publication. Congratulations on what is a remarkable achievement!

At an important moment like this, it is both an opportunity to look back on our history and to reflect on where our vision will guide us into the future. As *Nelson Mandela* said:

“vision on its own is merely dreaming, action on its own is mindless activity, but vision with action can change the world”.

The journey of LETNS began in February, 1997, when local resident associations in Lucan called a public meeting and presented the option of an Educate Together school. *The Educate Together idea was simple: educate children in an all-inclusive environment, with respect for all, irrespective of gender, religion, physical ability, ethnic or social background. Where all children are cherished.*

On September 1st, 1997, our school became a reality. Principal Tom Conaty and Assistant Sreen McCormack began teaching their 15 pupils using the Educate Together ideals. Our first home was to be the scout's hall situated on the rich alluvial soil by the ancient Liffey. Within two years, the school had expanded to five teachers and we moved to four port-a-cabins in the grounds of St. Edmundsbury. From there, the school moved to its permanent site in Willsbrook, transforming itself from prefabs to the solid and beautiful building that is present today.

Behind this brief history of the school's development and progress, one has to have an enormous feeling of gratitude for the work and dedication of key people in our school down through the years. They were people who wanted something different for

their children and who invested themselves wholeheartedly in pursuit of their dream.

Lucan Educate Together has witnessed phenomenal growth in a relatively short period of time. Projected enrolment for September 2005 is 450 pupils with a staff of 36. It is inevitable that in a rapidly expanding school such as ours that changes will occur. Coping with this change becomes the critical action. Like the traveller setting out on a distant journey, we must bring with us what is essential for the journey if we are to face the challenges of the future with hope and courage. As *Ben Okri* says in one of his poems:

“Our future is better than our past”.

Our signposts for the future must be the four pillars of our ethos as outlined in this document, and which sets Educate Together apart as a unique educational option in Irish society. Alongside its growth and development, we must all try to ensure that our school remains a warm, caring and welcome place where each individual child, parent or staff member is respected and valued. Our history shows us that what we

have today was built on many little steps along the way. By working together and facing the difficulties and challenges of the early days, a sense of community and ownership has evolved. This sense of community, which is fostered through people working together for a common purpose, was never more essential than in the Irish society of today. As always, each year will bring its own challenges and opportunities. I am convinced that by continuing on the road already begun, Lucan Educate Together National School can make a real difference in contributing to a more inclusive, caring and just society. To quote the poet *Robert Frost*:

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I, I took the road less travelled by And that has made all the difference”.

Mary Tuohy, June 2005.





An introduction to the life and ethos of our school

In this guide, we have aimed to capture in live detail what it means to be part of Lucan Educate Together National School (LETNS). This document describes where we now stand as we move into the 2005-6 academic year. The issues we face, and experiences we have as a community, will change and develop over the years ahead and we anticipate that this guide will need to be revised every five years.

In LETNS, we are proud to live and learn within an ethos that is based on a triangle of care and responsibility.

Encouraging and supporting our schoolchildren's safe, healthy and happy development is our shared priority. We hold all children, staff, parents and guardians as equally respected and valued members in our school community. All members share responsibility for the life, spirit and ongoing

Our triangle of care and responsibility



development of our school. This shared responsibility ranges from management of practical tasks, such as maintenance of school property, to hands-on work in the classroom to support and enhance the children's learning.

By Ethos, we mean the "characteristic spirit or attitudes" of our community – in our attention to ethos, we are concerned to remain aware of how all members of our school community relate to each other and what values and attitudes are being daily experienced by our children.

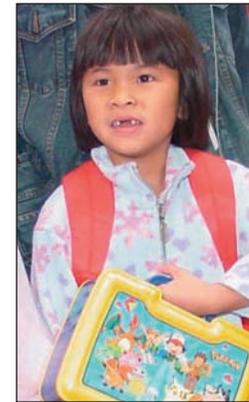
There are four pillars to the ethos of our school, as in all Educate Together schools. We are:

- (1) Child-centred
- (2) Multi-denominational
- (3) Democratic
- (4) Co-educational

IN PART ONE of this guide we will be describing, in some detail, our everyday experience of these four pillars or principles. For each pillar, we will:

- ▶ describe or define what the pillar means,

- ▶ give positive examples of the pillar in practice in our school,
- ▶ outline some current challenges in living according to the particular pillar, while also giving some ideas on how we can meet these challenges and work on the ongoing development of our ethos.



IN PART TWO, we will be including an overview of our outreach classes for children with autistic spectrum disorders, some detail on parental involvement in our school, and descriptions of the policies we currently have in place for our school.





Part One: The pillars of our ethos

1. We are Child-Centred

Definition

Our school community is at all times child-centred: each child's ability, needs, pace of learning and individuality are recognized and respected. Each is encouraged and supported to develop to their maximum potential. *Child-centredness is fundamental to our school* and this principle is established as a legal obligation on the Board of Management (BOM), i.e., in all decisions or projects approved by the Board, the developmental needs of the children must be its first priority.

It is our aim that all activities and projects that the children engage in within the school, or in relation to the school, are at all times child-centred and age appropriate.

Positive illustrations of child-centred practice

(a) Within our classrooms

- Our teachers guide the children through the curriculum, all the time aiming to pro-

mote development of self-esteem, confidence and intellectual ability.

- Our teachers strive to provide a relaxed learning environment of mutual respect between the child and his/her teacher.
- Our teachers emphasise positive reinforcement of good behaviour.
 - ▶ *For example: To reward children for good behaviour that the teacher and children have agreed upon previously, they can be awarded "Golden Guy" certificates by the teacher.*
- There is recognition of children's effort and of personal achievements, relative to their own past performance, rather than compared to others.
 - ▶ *For instance, improvement in a spelling test will be rewarded.*
- The presentation of the child's work in school (for instance art work displayed on the walls) does not focus on excellence but is about celebration of effort/creativity.
- Teachers strive to actively listen to the children, their experiences, and their concerns, attention being paid to sort out problems, whenever possible.
 - ▶ *For instance, there is a yard incident*

book, which helps teachers to follow up incidents such as bullying. Such follow-up fosters children's security and confidence in teachers.

- "Golden time", that is, an extra half-hour playtime on Fridays, allows more time for relaxation, imaginative play and socialising.
- Our school has invested in extra readers, which are assigned and exchanged every week to each child according to her/his reading level.

(b) In our broader school life

- Our school pays special attention to building relationships between the child/teacher/parent and this fosters a sense of security in the children. *All staff use first names*, assisting in their approachability for both parents and children. In the junior and outreach classes, we offer particular flexibility and sensitivity in the handover of care in the morning from parent to teacher.
- The Student Council represents all classes – in this, the children's experience, opinion and contribution are formally valued.
- Our school regularly holds Assemblies and special events where the child's individual contribution is encouraged, thus offering opportunities for self-expression and building confidence.
 - ▶ *For example: Fruits of the Earth project, Science week, Friendship week.*
- Special events, such as global awareness week, celebrate the difference and diversity that exists in our school community, helping all children to feel valued.
- The Sports Day is run as both a competitive and non-competitive event, and it focuses on participation and enjoyment rather than results. This teaches the child to emphasise his individuality and to work for a personal best, as well as to co-operate with others.



- The children's playtime experience has been developed through the painting of the yards and use of yard games – this encourages co-operative, imaginative play and reduces the potential for physical roughhousing or bullying.
- The availability of the meeting room from 1.30-2.30pm for parents and children waiting for their siblings is a child-friendly arrangement.
- The children's experience of contributing to the resources of the school is encouraged, but it is voluntary, age appropriate and usually has educational value. For example:
 - ▶ *Read-athon encourages children to read.*
 - ▶ *Sponsored walks promote exercise and an active lifestyle.*

(c) Our after-school activities and clubs

- Many opportunities are offered for the wider intellectual, artistic and physical development of the children through after-school activities and extra-curricular activities, such as:
 - ▶ *Art Activities, Athletics, Irish Dancing, Theatre and Drama, Chess Club, Soccer club.*

(d) Our child-centred policies

- Our school has an *anti-bullying policy* (see p.30).
- We promote a *healthy eating policy* (see p.32), to help initiate healthy eating habits from an early age.
- Our school has developed a *learning support policy* (see p.34).
- From September, 2005, the Principal is initiating a review of our *discipline policy* (see p.33 for existing policy), with the input of staff, children and parents.

(e) Child-centred formal practices

- Frequent applications are made to the special education section of the Department of Education & Science for children who need more support.
- Our school pools resources such as Special Needs Assistants and the Occupational Therapy Room for use by the wider community of children, rather than just those with special needs.
- For the safety of children and staff, we have an admittance procedure where all volunteers and visitors in the school are asked to sign in at the office and receive a visitor's pass.
- As in other mainstream schools, children with English as a second language are offered and can receive Learning Support in English.

(f) Maximizing our ability to meet the needs of all children

- We have developed outreach classes for *children with autism* (see *Outreach classes*, p.25). The inclusion in mainstream activities where possible is encouraged to the benefit of all.

- *Children with special needs* are welcome in our mainstream classes, as long as their specific needs can be catered for by the Department of Education and Science.

Challenges in being child-centred

- A teacher with a class of 30 pupils has limited time to spend on a one-to one basis with the children, so we cannot cater for educational levels/needs and pace of learning as well as we would like to. *Ideally, class sizes should be reduced.* In the current situation, we strive to manage by:

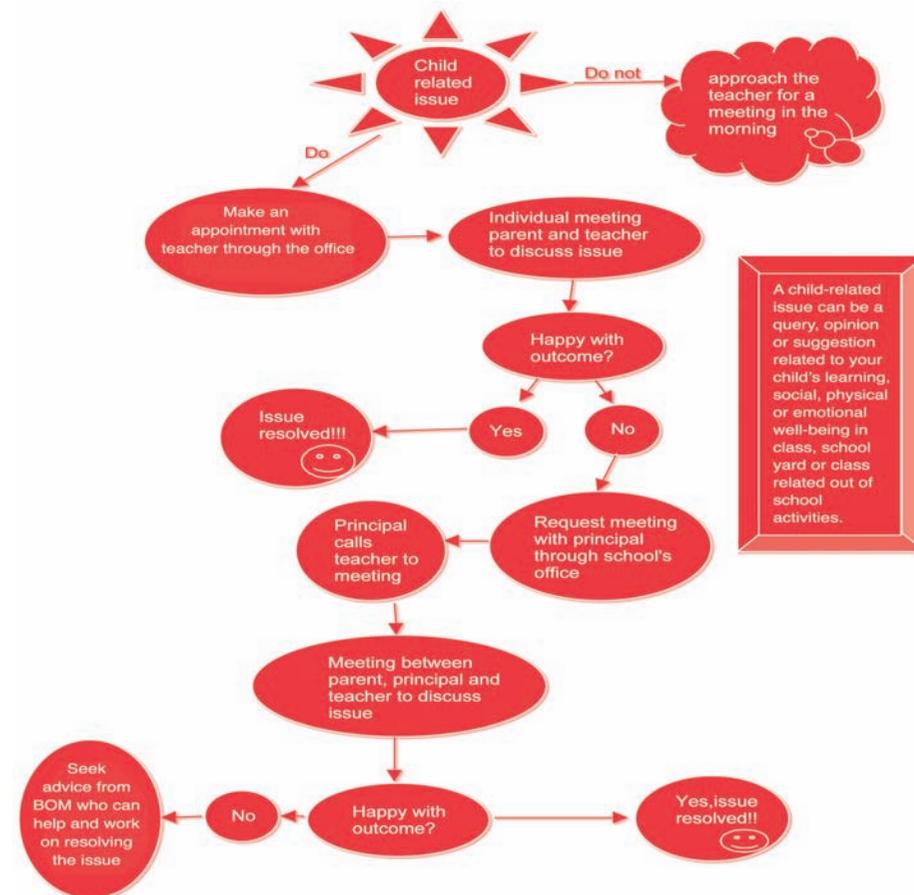
- ▶ Being proactive with resources, and distributing them when needed. For example, the junior classes share a teacher's assistant.
- ▶ Parents volunteer to help with activities like reading, art, and cooking.
- ▶ We need continuous pressure from parents and INTO (teachers union) on the Department of Education and Science as ultimately reduction of class sizes is a Government decision.

- *There can be conflicts of interest*, or difficulties deciding, what is in the best interests of our children in relation to a specific issue or situation. For instance, in relation to classroom discipline, a parent could hold a different opinion to a teacher on how a child's needs are being met.

- ▶ We need to do more to develop awareness and understanding of how to address and resolve differences so that our children's needs are discussed and appropriately met (see flowcharts on how to raise a general school issue, p.21, and on how to raise a child-related issue, p.11).

- The nature of our *enrolment policy* has been an ongoing debate in our school. While we have always operated on an openly equal first-come, first-served basis,

How to raise a child-related issue



with only limited discretionary places, there is a concern that a child's welfare may be compromised by a sibling not being able to join the school because of a low position on the pre-enrolment list.

- ▶ The school management are open to reviewing school policies such as our enrolment policy, keeping our child-centred principle to the fore. We plan to initiate a review of the enrolment policy from the 2005-6 school year (see Enrolment policy, p35 for current policy).

- *Developing anti-bullying practice:* Our school needs to continue to develop awareness and practice in dealing with bullying and other forms of aggression.

- ▶ Our school nominates a staff member, who is responsible for discipline and anti-bullying and can act as an advisor for staff. It may be helpful for this person to also be named for children and parents as an individual they can turn to with concerns about bullying/aggression. This may encourage people to speak up even when nervous or unsure.



2. We are multi-denominational

Definition

Our school community is multi-denominational and multicultural. *We uphold, respect and accept equality of beliefs*, whether religious or non-religious, and we celebrate diverse lifestyles held by children, parents, staff and members of the wider community.

In addition to the National Curriculum, our school follows an Ethical Core Curriculum, which focuses on the children's moral and spiritual development. It has four main strands:

1. Moral and spiritual development,
2. Equality and justice issues,
3. Ethics and the environment,
4. Belief systems and religions.

It is important to understand that, by its very nature, *a multi-denominational education is not a substitute for religious education or catechism*. The Board of Management facilitates any group of the school community who wishes to organise religious or ethical instruction outside the school programme.

Our multi-denominational instruction leads our children to:

- Understand the concept and importance of

different beliefs and values, religious and non-religious.

- Learn about the different customs, rituals and traditions of various cultures, communities and religions.
- Feel free to express their own creed and celebrate their own festive days without feeling isolated and/or discriminated against

Positive illustrations of our multi-denominational principle and Ethical Core Curriculum

(a) Moral and spiritual development

Addresses issues related to values and behaviour.

- Our school follows the "Walk Tall" programme, which encourages respect for oneself and others. We emphasise the fact that stealing, hurting someone physically and/or verbally, lying, and so on, are not acceptable.

- Discussions are held with children to encourage acceptance, tolerance and understanding of the customs and rituals observed by different religious and ethnic communities.
- Each year, our school holds a "friendship week", which ends with a little show where children sing songs about friendship and refer to personal experiences.
- As part of our anti-bullying policy, we have a "telling policy", encouraging children to report incidents and concerns. All are involved in promoting this policy, and children's posters with "tell" written on them can be seen throughout the school.

(b) Equality and justice

Addresses issues related to discrimination and racism.

- Our school is non-racist and non-discriminatory. Children are taught in an environment where they understand that skin colour, gender, religion, or social background may not constitute a basis for discrimination. For example, in classroom work children have learned about Dr Martin Luther King's human rights movement for Afro-Americans in the 1960's, which highlighted the right of all to self-expression.
- Throughout the school programme, we aim to help children recognize prejudice and discrimination, and to develop an empathy and concern for their fellow human beings. We also strive to challenge stereotyping, allowing equal acceptance of the different cultures present in our school.
- We have organized cultural exhibitions where parents and children from different countries brought in traditional, typical objects to be displayed in the library.
- We have organized a little market where children and parents could buy products imported from developing countries - this

raised funds which were given to an invited Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO).

(c) Ethics and the environment

Addresses issues related to right and wrong, encouraging responsible choices.

- Here, we address broader ethical issues such as health (e.g., healthy eating) and the environment (e.g., pollution, cleaning and recycling). The children are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own surroundings.
- Our school is working towards becoming a "Green School". Staff and children are involved in recycling of cardboard, plastic and paper as well as composting of fruit and vegetable waste. We also plan to develop a school garden and to begin anti-litter initiatives.
- On a daily and weekly basis, children are allocated duties to look after their classroom.
- To help address healthy eating and promote responsible choices in relation to drugs, we invite and welcome input from health professionals.

(d) Beliefs systems and religions

Fostering awareness and acceptance of various belief systems.

- We foster knowledge and understanding of various religious and philosophical ideas. No religion or belief system is prioritised and the children learn to accept diverse beliefs as the norm.
- In our classrooms, we display and follow the multi-faith calendar. It is our aim that the main festivals of the religions represented in the school are discussed and informed on each year within the class-

room, at an age-appropriate level.

- Information concerning different religions and belief systems is displayed on the school notice board for all the school community. This is updated each month, under the guidance of a teacher who has special responsibility for ethos and belief systems.
- Traditional dress is accepted in school and allows the opportunity for full expression of each individual's cultural identity.
- In the classroom children learn about the various cultural events which are of importance to our community, for instance the Chinese New Year, The Hindu Festival of Lights (Diwali), The harvest festival, Halloween, Christian major festivities of Christmas and Easter, Muslim Ramadan, Eid and Jewish Hanukah.
- We regularly invite members of our community who follow different religions or beliefs to discuss their belief with the children.
- Cultural events are organised to offer opportunities to socialise and enjoy our diversity as a community. For instance, our always-successful Gourmet Night, which is now held every second year.

Challenges in being multi-denominational and multicultural

- **The risk of becoming "non-denominational".** We have had the experience of becoming nervous of speaking openly about our beliefs for fear of offending others or undermining others' beliefs. To hold onto and celebrate our diversity, we need to allow more openness about what we believe.
 - ▶ We are now more actively celebrating different faiths in our school. We have started displaying different religious icons in the school reception area, during times of major festivals.

- ▶ We could organize more social events expressing our multicultural, multi-denominational nature, e.g., more events with music, dance, etc.
- **Teachers cannot talk extensively about each and every belief system. This may leave some parents unsatisfied as they may feel too little has been said about their own belief or religion.**
 - ▶ We can focus on the beliefs and religions present in the school. To these, if absent, we can add the world's faiths that gather a substantial number of believers (Christians, Jews, Muslim, Hindus, etc). For each group, the children can learn about their most important celebrations.
 - ▶ We need to be explicit about the fact that only so much can be taught in the school and that we do not give formal religious instruction. **We need to ensure that all are aware of religious teaching which is held outside the school programme.** There is a notice board available for advertising religious instruction. The different communities could usefully be reminded each year that they can apply to the BOM to hold their own classes in the school building.
- **A lot of families in the school do not disclose their belief system.** While we respect the wishes of those who want to maintain their privacy, it is hard then to actively include all our community's values and beliefs in the school programme.
 - ▶ We may need to do more to encourage people to feel free to share their beliefs, religious or non-religious, in case some feel anxious about being different or not accepted.
- **What should be said for non-religious?** Children whose parents are non-religious may feel they miss out by not having their own celebrations. They may also wonder why their parents are not religious while others are.



- ▶ It may help for the children to learn that most religious celebrations have their roots in very old, ancestral celebrations. Others are linked to historical facts (e.g., Thanksgiving, Hanukah.)
- ▶ For older children, it may be interesting to establish a link between religion and society by showing maps of the world and discussing the "dominant" religions in each country.
- ▶ Discuss with the children that, **for many, being religious is a personal choice** and while children normally follow and respect their family's belief system, one may become religious or non-religious as she/he grows up. Similarly, some people may change their religious beliefs over their lifetime. Also, in some families there can be more than one belief system.
- ▶ Finally, we can stress the fact that even if you do not share someone else's belief, there is no reason not to share in and enjoy a celebration.
- **Multiculturalism and Ethnic Minorities:** We would like all children to feel at ease in the school, whether or not English is their mother tongue. Children learning English as a second language are invited to take English support classes. It is important that the fact that a child speaks other languages is not perceived as a weakness but is rather seen as strength.
 - ▶ To further support the significance of languages other than English and Irish, it would be interesting for our school to offer a foreign language as an extra-curricular activity. The school management hope that this may be an option in the near future.
- ▶ Our school promotes a sensitivity and understanding of those children growing up in a mixed cultural environment. Therefore all children are included in celebrating major cultural Irish festivities (St Patrick's Day, Ceili-Irish Dancing parties) as their own.
- Some parents from **non-English speaking** countries may not feel confident with their English and may be reluctant to get involved in the school's activities or to report concerns in relation to their child. Everyone's individual, professional and personal skills need to be valued and taken into account in the on-going work of our school, regardless of their level of English and culture.
 - ▶ We need to find ways of promoting the participation, contribution and expression of opinion of all members of the school community.
 - ▶ English language classes for non-English speaking parents of our community are available in our school. These classes focus on understanding school communications, letters and practices and are run by a parent in the school. From September 2005 these classes will receive VEC funding.
 - ▶ We hope to have standard letters for parents translated into the main languages represented in our school and available from the 2005-6 school year.

Map showing the many cultures represented in Lucan Educate Together National School, June 2005





3. We are democratic

Definition

Central to our Educate Together philosophy is a child-centred approach that is facilitated by a *close co-operative relationship between teachers and parents*.

We work towards fostering each child in a democratic spirit. In this way, we aim to enable the children to live by and to respect the basic ideas of democracy: power sharing and freedom of speech.

Our school community emphasises *individual and collective responsibility* for the children's education, for the financial and practical support of the school, for discipline, for communication, and for the ongoing development of the school.

The Board of Management and Executive Committee operate in a representative manner. There is an obligation on the Board to involve both parents and teachers in building an educational community where the children benefit from the full use of both resources.

The work of our school committees is undertaken in a democratic fashion. Because of our Educate Together commitment to inclusiveness and equality, every effort is made to arrive at decisions by consensus. Only if consensus fails is majority voting employed. *We strive to ensure that all committee deci-*

sions or proposals, whether arrived at by consensus or majority vote, are in harmony with our ethos.

Positive illustrations of democratic practice

(a) In our classrooms

- Through all classes, the children are taught to express their own views and to value their right to do so. Each child is also helped to accept the right to diversity of opinions.
- Children get to practice how to meet and resolve conflicts with teacher(s) and/or with other pupils. When appropriate, experiences of conflicts and differences of opinion are used as opportunities for debate and learning.
- Rather than being authority figures, our teachers aim to be mentors or guides to the children, encouraging learning through discussion and participation.
- Our school encourages parents to be involved in assisting in the classroom and in yard supervision – in this, there is an ongoing commitment to actively sharing responsibility for the children's development.

(b) School discipline

- We emphasise individual and collective responsibility for discipline. We encourage all members of our community to behave with respect for each other. Day-to-day responsibility for discipline rests with the staff. As well as reinforcing positive behaviour, there are a series of graded sanctions, which are used as consequences for misbehaviour and to help promote self-discipline – these sanctions are displayed on each classroom wall. Our teachers explain to the children why they should act in a desired way and the children are given opportunities to explain their actions.
- Our whole school body, including the children, were involved in writing our school's discipline policy. The policy is due to be reviewed, again with the input of all (see discipline policy, p.33).

(c) Student Council

- The Student Council allows the students' voice and ideas to be formally represented. The Council has a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, and a teacher representative is present at each meeting. The Council has its own constitution, developed by the children and staff together in 2002.
- Each year, two representatives from each class are nominated (from Junior and outreach classes) or elected (democratic voting) onto the Student Council. The Council meets once a fortnight during school hours.
- Ideas for fundraisers, school-wide improvements and activities for school spirit are generated in the classrooms and passed onto the Student Council for further discussion. Council recommendations may then be presented to the PTA and BOM for additional input and action.
- The Council have organised talent shows,

an exhibition of the children's artwork, and were involved in picking the school logo.

(d) Executive Committee

- The Lucan Educate Together Association is the patron body of our school. Membership of the Association is open to all members of our school and the wider community.
- The Association is run by the Executive Committee, which is elected at the AGM. Members are elected for two years and, if re-elected, may serve for a maximum of four years. The committee consists of nine members: a Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, and six ordinary members.
- The role of the Executive committee includes:
 - ▶ Developing and upholding our Ethos.
 - ▶ Maintenance of school buildings and grounds.
 - ▶ Appointing the Chairperson of the BOM.
 - ▶ Monitoring the working of the BOM and school policies.

(e) Board of Management BOM

- The BOM is a democratically elected committee, consisting of eight members who serve for 4 years:
 - ▶ The Principal
 - ▶ A member of the teaching staff, elected by staff
 - ▶ 2 parent representatives, elected by the PTA
 - ▶ 2 direct nominees of the Executive committee
 - ▶ 2 independent representatives nominated and elected by the other 6 members.
- The Chairperson of the BOM is one of the Executive's nominees. A secretary and a treasurer are elected from within the BOM.

- The BOM is responsible for the direct running of the school and must do so in accordance with the Educate Together ethos. It meets once a month, discussing issues such as:

- ▶ Correspondence from the Department of Education and Science
- ▶ Use of school premises
- ▶ Appointment of staff
- ▶ Finance and grants
- ▶ Monthly reports from the Principal, Chairperson, staff and PTA representatives, and treasurer.

- To include an item on the agenda for the BOM meeting, a letter can be sent to the Chairperson at the school address. This item may then be discussed in strict confidence at the next BOM meeting. If the matter is not private, individuals can choose to address their issue at a PTA meeting to the parent representatives on the BOM.

(f) Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

- The PTA offers a forum for discussion, suggestions and exchange of information for all adults in our school community. **Good communication is essential for a healthy school atmosphere.** The PTA is not a policy making or decision making group.
- Parents and teachers who attend the PTA AGM (Annual General Meeting) elect a committee to manage the PTA for a one-year term. The committee includes a representative from the teaching staff, two from the BOM, one from the Executive Committee and two parent representatives. There is a chairperson, a secretary and a fundraiser.
- All members of our community are welcome to attend once-monthly meetings. At these meetings, a report is given from the Executive Committee, the Board of Management, the Ethos group and the

teaching staff. The floor is then open to raise any issue of concern. Issues raised have included: traffic problems; grounds maintenance; healthy eating policy enforcement.

- If a parent is unable to attend a meeting, but wishes to raise an item, this may be done by contacting the classroom representative for their class (see flowchart on "How to raise a general school issue" p.21).

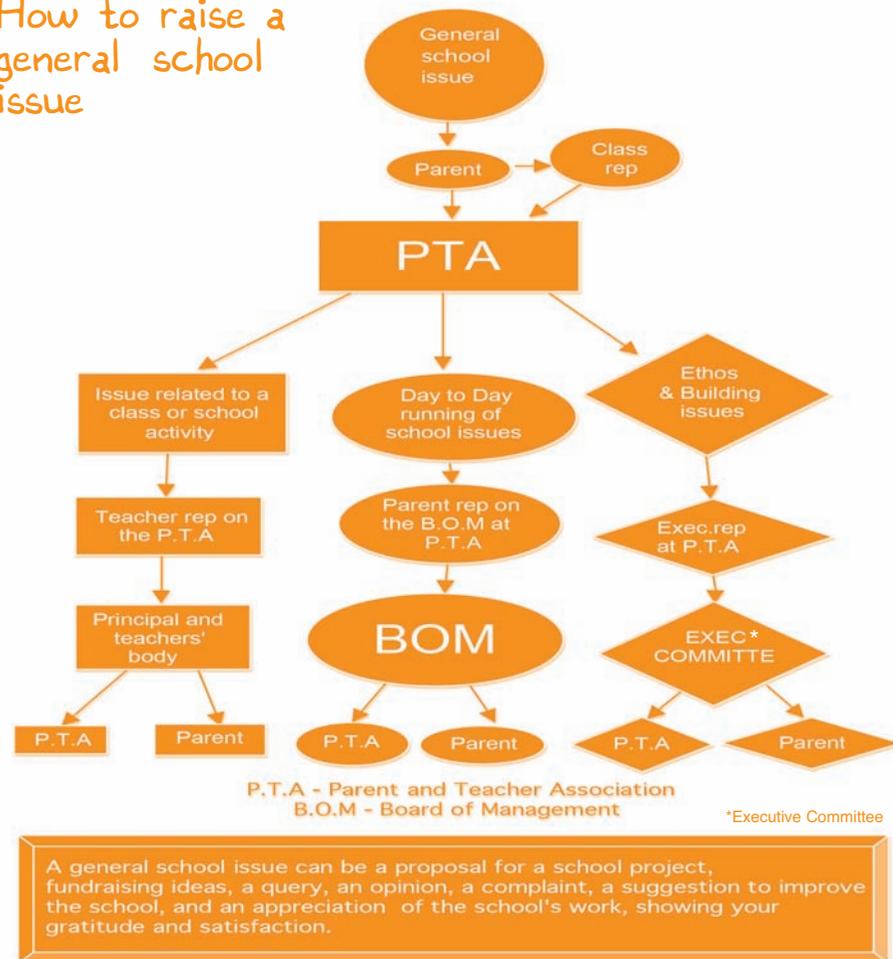
(g) Ethos group

- The Ethos Group meets with the following main aims:
 - ▶ To provide opportunities, open to all parents and staff, to discuss issues relevant to the health and vitality of our school community.
 - ▶ To work on developing guidelines and policies to inform and advise staff, committees and parents regarding our ethos.
- The ethos group has a fluid membership - parents, guardians, staff and members of the wider community can move in and out of being involved in the group's work. The group works with issues that have been raised or identified in any part of the school community. Individuals can choose to be involved for one meeting, through e-mail, through phone advice or for particular projects. **All contributions are welcomed**, as the group aims to involve as many people as possible in the ongoing work of developing and enhancing our school's ethos.

(h) Fundraising

- Responsibility for fundraising is shared - all are encouraged to take part in some way as raising funds is essential for the ongoing maintenance and development of our school. **We are only state funded for 60-70% of our running costs.**

How to raise a general school issue



- Any parents can approach the PTA fundraiser with ideas about fundraising. S/he then liaises with the BOM and Executive regarding approving a project and ensuring that it respects our ethos (committee guidelines for approving fundraising projects are available in the office).
- Fundraising activities contribute to building community spirit. Some fundraising activities are specifically for the children (e.g., Walk in the Park), some are for the

adults (e.g., Gourmet night) and some are for the whole community (e.g., Treasure Hunt).

(i) Principle of receptiveness to varying opinions and commitment to conflict resolution

- A principle we attempt to embrace as a school community is that varying opinions

are healthy and appropriate, and we try to encourage approachability, open expression and constructive debate. Rather than problems being raised and then left with staff or school committees, *we encourage people to take responsibility for finding ways to work with staff to solve problems that they have identified.*

Challenges in being democratic

• *As our school community becomes larger and potentially more anonymous, a smaller percentage of the parent body is actively involved in supporting the ongoing development of our school.* To address this, we need to understand what may be holding people back, for instance:

- ▶ Not realising the real need for parents' ongoing contribution.
- ▶ Fear of commitment.
- ▶ Lack of confidence in coming forward to offer opinions or skills.
- ▶ Believing they cannot influence decisions or practices.
- ▶ The language used, for instance the word "committee", can sound exclusive and may put people off joining.

• *Parents are often invited through letters in the schoolbags to become involved in various activities or projects. However, there is usually a small response to such general invitations.*

- ▶ We need to do more to keep our contacts and invitations personally meaningful.
- ▶ It would be good to hold an introductory evening every year as part of the September PTA meeting (when turnout is highest and new families attend). In this, we could have tables for different areas of activity, keeping it personal, with real faces for teachers and parents.

▶ We could encourage our classroom representatives to personally approach people from their class to become involved in particular projects.

• *Keeping channels of communication open where all are informed is an ongoing challenge.* As our community grows, there can be a danger of the general parent body becoming more separate from the staff and committees. This can be seen at times in discussions in the yard, where problems are discussed amongst parents but not brought forward for attention and resolution in the school. To address this:

- ▶ Correct channels for communication need to be clearly defined and obvious to all.
- ▶ We need clearer lines of responsibility in relation to the different committees so that when a problem is brought forward it can be more effectively dealt with.
- ▶ We need to do more to ensure that feedback is clearly given regarding the outcomes of problems or ideas raised. The resolution of problems normally is a slow process and people can feel nothing is being done.

• *While we strive to meet and resolve conflicts or differences of opinion when they arise, we need clearer procedures in place.*

- ▶ A policy and procedure for conflict resolution, with lines of communication and responsibility, needs to be developed.
- ▶ We need to develop a code of conduct for adults in our community, encouraging respectful and appropriate behaviour between parents and staff, even when there are emotional conflicts.



4. We are Co-Educational

Definition

An appreciation of one's gender is an important aspect of developing a sense of self-identity. For this reason, *our school-children are encouraged to explore their unique potential in an environment that is committed to providing equal opportunities for boys and girls.* Equality is an important concept that promotes parity between genders.

Our co-educational principle accepts that there are unique differences between boys and girls and acknowledges the right to those differences. Our aim is to ensure that each individual has the opportunity to develop in a balanced environment, which does not favour one gender over the other or promote gender stereotypes. We are also dedicated to fostering respect, understanding and friendship between girls and boys.

Positive illustrations of co-educational practice

(a) Within our classrooms

- Through being with the opposite sex from junior infants, our children gain a confi-

dence and ease in being together. They grow to understand each other. This increases social skills and communication between the sexes.

- The pupils learn together from a young age. Each sex sees that there is a wide range of ability within the class and that this has nothing to do with gender.
- Teachers in our school strive to value the ability of boys and girls equally - each child is encouraged to reach his/her maximum potential in all subject areas.
- Our teachers try to make sure that both genders get an equal share in decision-making within their class.
- In the classroom, children take turns doing chores and they all participate in the division of labour. No distinctions are made between sexes in this respect.

(b) In our broader school life

- Our school follows a sports curriculum and also offers extra-curricular sporting activities. Participation in all types of sport is open to both sexes; for instance, girls are represented in soccer and chess is a popular extra-curricular activity for both sexes.
- We are represented in Santry Stadium

each year by the best of our athletes who train together outside school hours. Medals have been won by both genders.

- There is a strong artistic tradition in our school, and our arts programme encourages both genders equally, all the activities being enjoyed by boys and girls alike. For instance, Poetry Week has all children writing poems.
- Girls and boys play together and become familiar with each other's different ways of playing. Also on toy day (Friday), the children can see that there are individual differences in what the other sex likes to play with – for example, not all girls like dolls and not all boys like action toys. This leads to less gender stereotyping and more tolerance and acceptance of diversity.
- The student council strives to give an equal voice to boys and girls in representing their classes and the issues that affect them.
- Children are encouraged to be proud of their own gender as well as to respect the opposite gender. In this regard, name-calling, which undermines a child's gender identity and self-esteem (e.g., calling a boy a "girl" if he cries) is not acceptable and is challenged.
- The lack of school uniform means that girls and boys are free to develop and experiment with their own identity through the clothes they wear.

Challenges implementing the co-educational principle

- **In shared activities**, some children might not want to team up with the opposite sex and prefer to stay in same-sex groupings. For instance, during set dancing classes, some did not want to hold hands with the opposite sex. However, when encouraged to do it, the children had great fun despite their initial reticence.



- Children learn a lot about **roles and stereotypes** at home. This can be at odds with the messages the school wants to promote. Some cultures value the sexes differently, too.
- There is a danger that **physical space in the yard** can be taken over by those children who tend to be more boisterous. For instance, those who want to play skipping games/hopscotch may be pushed to the side. This could be a gender issue.
 - ▶ There will be more set-out areas for play and sport now that the prefabricated buildings have been demolished – this should help in allowing more space for different types of play.
- While in theory, the Student Council gives both sexes an equal chance to be a representative, it can be affected by the **uneven distribution of sexes in some classes**. Positive discrimination may then occur to promote balanced representation. Could this mean that the best person for the Council is not picked if we are trying to have an equal gender balance?
 - ▶ We strive for a gender balance but election to the Council is a democratic process and should not be influenced by positive discrimination.
- **In P.E. classes** gender issues sometimes arise on religious/cultural grounds. This requires sensitive handling and we strive to ensure that cultural values are respected.
 - ▶ For instance, if they or their families wish, Muslim girls may wear a full body-suit when they are swimming with boys.



Part Two: Our policies and practices

This section describes current policies and practices in LETNS. All our policies are reviewed and updated from time to time by the Executive and Board

of Management, as we strive to ensure that we meet the changing needs of our developing school community.

Outreach Classes for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

(a) Foundation principles

The underlying philosophy for the outreach classes at LETNS is that the students attending the unit are children first, and children with autistic spectrum second. Autistic spectrum disorder is a pervasive developmental disorder affecting social communication, interaction and flexibility of thought. Sensory difficulties are also a common feature of the condition.

The classroom environment is designed to create a relaxed atmosphere where individual needs are respected and effective learning can take place.

(b) The children and staff

In 2005, there are 12 students attending the outreach classes. All are boys, ranging

from 6 years to 13 years in age.

In each class there is one teacher and 2-3 special needs assistants (SNAs). Occupational and Speech and Language Therapists visit once a week to work with the students. Beech Park services offer support with behavioural challenges and with developing different approaches to communication difficulties.

(c) Methodologies

A number of different teaching techniques are used, depending on the learning strengths and deficits of each child. Because of the students' uneven learning profiles, there is a considerable emphasis on individual lessons. Group and paired work is employed when appropriate.

We use structured work systems and visual support strategies. Because of difficulties in processing language, the visual emphasis helps the children to organise their thoughts and responses more effectively. Use of visual timetables and prompts also provides predictability, security and lowers stress levels.

(d) Classroom layout and delivery of the curriculum

Both classrooms have individual workstations for each student as well as group tables. The workstations minimise distraction and provide a place for independent or one-to-one work to take place. These stations are 'safe spaces' for each student and help them to feel relaxed and secure as they learn.

Since the outreach classes were established, ongoing development of curriculum provision has taken place. For details on the curriculum, please refer to the fuller copy of this document in the school office.

(e) Inclusion issues

We commit to fostering appropriate forms of integration and inclusion with the mainstream classes in the school.

Trinity College Dublin has run a number of projects, which has focused on this process.

Depending on each boy's ability to cope with inclusion, a number of strategies have been used, such as:

- Having an "open" yard that allows the children with ASD to play with, or near, their mainstream peers.
- Buddy systems - where a mainstream child is paired with a child with ASD and they learn to play together, taking turns, sharing, etc.
- Traditional integration: a child from the outreach class attends a lesson in a mainstream class.
- Reverse integration: children from mainstream attend lessons in the outreach classes.
- Involvement of the children with ASDs in school activities such as assemblies, trips, sports, etc.

These measures have met with varying degrees of success and in many ways provide mainstream pupils with more learning opportunities than their peers with autism.

(f) Parental involvement

The parents of the students who attend the outreach classes have been very involved in the development of the unit. They worked extremely hard to ensure the setting up of the classes and offer support and remain highly involved in its continuing progress.

both academically and personally. Our school's aim is to create a well functioning school with content, progressing children.

Our school is run by paid professional staff, who follow the National Curriculum. However, we also invite, and need, parents to participate in their child's schooling. In various ways - from fundraising, to manage-



ment of school business, to assistance in the classrooms - parents offer our staff ongoing professional and personal support through such structures as the Volunteer Programme, the BOM, the PTA and the Executive Committee.

The Department of Education only funds LETNS to about 60-70% of operating costs. Fundraising, is therefore a basic requirement for the ongoing running of the school. **Any contribution from parents in the form of fundraising, volunteer or committee work, at some stage during the child's schooling, is most welcome.** Additional financial contributions, as well as prompt payment of the standard family contribution, donations of books, DVD's, video or other school material, are all warmly received. Greater parental involvement in our school adds to our children feeling a part of the school community, and helps parents to become more familiar with our school's work and staff.

(b) Building relationships

- Parents/guardians and teachers share

responsibility for consolidating the educational learning and the social development of the child. At home, parents/guardians can assist by talking with their children about their experience and learning that day.

- In our school, parents and children call all staff by their first names and this assists in the teacher's approachability.
- While settling into Junior Infants and the Outreach classes, parents are welcome to enter the classroom with their children in the morning. It is important to focus on settling the children in and to not delay the teacher at this time as she/he has a whole class to attend to.
- A curriculum night is normally held each autumn in the school where teachers inform parents of the work to be covered in the classroom. We are currently reviewing the format of this.
- Individual parent-teacher meetings on each child's overall development in class are held annually, usually in February. A report card on each child is sent home at the end of each year.
- **Our teachers ask for parents' help and participation, in such areas as:**

- ♦ Classroom activities, such as cooking, painting, paired reading, school trips and swimming.
- ♦ Talking about a specific religion, belief or celebration.
- ♦ To help with the artistic, linguistic, musical or scientific programme.
- ♦ Yard supervision.

When parents assist the teacher, it is important to be guided by the teacher at all times and respect his/her professional role.

- To facilitate parental attendance at Assemblies, Sports Days, etc., we give as much advance notice as possible.
- Meetings of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) are the main method of

Parental Involvement

(a) Introduction

Our school pays special attention to building relationships between the child/teacher/parent, while also recognising appropriate boundaries.

Our staff works towards creating a relaxed, safe and friendly atmosphere that allows the children to maximise their learning potential

face-to-face communication amongst parents, guardians and staff. All are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.

(c) Respecting boundaries

- We believe in genuine open dialogue based on trust and respect between teachers and parents/guardians for the common good of the children.
- When children see an ease of communication between teachers and parents it fosters their trust in the teacher. We understand that trust can easily be destroyed by an aggressive approach by either parent or teacher.
- Parents are welcome to give suggestions and comments about the school or class as long as the teacher's professional role as educator and the National Curriculum are respected.
- In LETNS we respect the professional relationship between teachers and parents, by being sensitive about the limits of each other's private lives.
- In order to protect the right of privacy of other children, the teacher will only discuss issues relating to your own child.

(d) Parents helping their children on a daily basis

- Our school does not provide the children with food or drink. It is important to provide your child with a substantial, healthy lunch, so that your child can concentrate and learn with ease (see Healthy Eating policy, p.32).
- **Punctuality is encouraged in school.** The class waits in line in the schoolyard until 8.50a.m., for the teacher to lead them to their classroom. Junior and Senior Infants need to be collected at 1.30p.m. from their classroom, outreach classes at 1.30p.m./2.30p.m. from their classrooms, and other classes from the main schoolyard at 2.30p.m.



- In the interest of your child's comfort and safety, please make sure that your child wears appropriate clothes and footwear (see Dress code, p.36).
- If a parent needs to give the child a book, snack-box, message or similar, please go through the office rather than to the classroom as this can disrupt the class.
- **Always notify the school's office, in writing, of any sick days or doctor's appointment or similar that your child may have.** After 20 days of absence per school year, the Department of Education & Science needs to be notified by the school.
- If your child needs to be taken out of school early for a doctor's appointment or similar, please make sure to sign out your child at the school's office.
- **Please check your child's bag for school notes** about assemblies, teacher's in-service training days, school holidays, and similar.
- From Senior Infants, when the children have non-written homework and from 1st class when written homework starts, keeping up to date with homework is a good way of being aware of your child's educational development and helps to prevent your child from falling behind. Do not hesitate to ask for support when needed.
- If there are social or behavioural problems

(e.g., bullying), an open discussion with the teacher in the early stages will greatly help to support the child (see Anti-Bullying Policy, p.30).

- **If you have any concerns or queries about your child's academic progress or emotional well being, please make an appointment with the teacher.** This can be arranged through the office, by leaving a message or a sealed letter for the teacher, with a brief description about the matter (see "How to raise a child-related issue" flowchart, p.11).

(e) Creating a positive atmosphere among children and the community

We aim to achieve and maintain a daily sense of care, respect and friendliness towards each other, so that all children, parents and staff will remain involved and happy in our school. We can do this in many ways, including:

- At our children's drop-off and pick-up times, it is worth making some personal and friendly connections with others, through simple "hellos", smiles, and small courtesies like holding doors open for each other. This creates an experience of warmth and friendliness for the adults and models good behaviour for the children.
- Children can be sensitive about who gets invited to parties or receives Christmas cards, etc. As such, invitations/cards should not be given out through the classroom or teacher and should be given directly to parents/guardians. Also, to avoid disappointment, it is important to reply to all invitations. Taking the time to respect these courtesies will help the children develop respect for the feelings of others and create stronger friendships.
- **If a parent is worried about their child, take time to listen and support them. Please help them bring the worry to a staff, PTA or committee member.**

Volunteer Policy

This is a summary; a full copy is available from the office

The LETNS Volunteer policy was initiated in the 2004-5 school year. This policy aims to govern the relationship between parents who provide volunteer services to our school, the teachers, children and Board of Management (BOM).

From the introduction of this policy, our school plans to achieve the following:

- Increase the number of parents participating as volunteers within our school.
- Identify the broad range of skills and resources available to our school through the parent community.

- Provide clear principles and guidelines which will give parents, teachers and children a sense of clarity on the role of the volunteer within the school.
- Formulate a consistent approach for dealing with volunteers within our school.
- Control access to sensitive or personal information.
- Encourage parents of new children attending the school to volunteer.
- To ensure our teachers and children are aware of the volunteers working within our school environment.
- Build up a sense of community and own-





ership for the school with the volunteer and parent population.

- Provide the BOM with a pool of resources to assist in the management of the school.

We believe that this policy will positively affect teaching and learning by providing a framework that will provide a sense of ownership for the running and wellbeing of our school. This will be shared between the parent and teacher communities. In addition, the organisation of the school will have a

positive affect as the BOM will have a *pool of resources at our school's disposal, who have willingly volunteered to provide expertise and time in a range of areas.*

Some of the steps in becoming a Volunteer in our school are as follows:

- All parents will be requested to complete a 'Volunteer' form at the beginning of each school year outlining their interest in participating as a volunteer.
- All forms are returned to the secretary's office and forwarded to the secretary of the BOM. The secretary of the BOM will take note of the areas of interest of the parent and store for later use by the BOM.
- A member of the BOM will acknowledge receipt of the volunteer form and, to answer any questions relating to the policy, will contact each parent.
- Every parent wishing to participate will be requested to have his or her picture taken for use on an identification badge, which they are requested to wear at all times when doing volunteer work in our school.
- The school secretary and the BOM secretary will maintain a database of volunteer contact and identification information.

tures. Insulting someone such as negative comments about someone's appearance, clothing, actions, etc. Taunts, teasing or threats, ethnic slurs, racism, slurs against someone with special needs.

- Intimidation: Playing dirty tricks, defacing or taking possessions, abusive phone calls and e-mails, texting inappropriate messages.

At LETNS, our desire is to create a warm, caring and supportive learning environment that respects each individual. **Children are encouraged and supported at all times to take care of themselves and others.** Friendship and inclusion of others are values which are promoted both within the classroom and the wider school community. Each September is marked with "friendship week" which gives the opportunity to celebrate friendships while at the same time raising awareness of bullying and unacceptable behaviour.

In our school, bullying is viewed as a very destructive force and all incidents of behaviour, which are of a bullying nature, are taken seriously. Children are given a clear message that this is a "telling school". They are encouraged to report all incidents of inappropriate behaviour, no matter how trivial. All incidents are noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In this way, children gain confidence in telling.

The following summarises the procedures used within our school in dealing with bullying incidents.

First incident of bullying:

Any member of the school community, a child, parent or staff member may report an incident of bullying.

The class teacher will usually deal with the complaint initially. The teacher will investigate the incident by separately speaking with both the person who did the bullying

and the victim of the bullying. A record of the incident and those people involved will be kept and placed in the class folder.

(Note: as bullying is defined as behaviour that is systematic and ongoing, a first incident of bullying behaviour is not viewed as a bullying incident. It becomes bullying when there are subsequent incidents).

Second incident of bullying:

This would usually be referred to the Principal or Deputy Principal. An incident report will be written and filed in the classroom folder. A letter will be written to the parents of the person doing the bullying and the victim of the bullying. Records will be kept of parent/teacher conferences and plans of action.

Third and subsequent incidents of bullying:

The Principal or Deputy Principal will deal with this. Incident reports will be written and filed. Letters will be written to parents of children involved, as above. Records of actions plans and parent conferences are kept. If and when it is deemed necessary, outside agencies or third parties may be called in.

Outreach classes (with specific reference to children in our school community with Autistic Spectrum Disorders):

It is important and appropriate to recognize that many of the interactions of our children in the outreach classes, while reminiscent of bullying-type behaviours are in fact responses typically produced by their autism.

The children struggle specifically in the areas of social communication and social interaction. Ironically, while attempting to understand how to make social contact with others or to cope with social situations, their behaviour can actually be interpreted as highly anti-social.

Anti-Bullying Policy

This is a summary; a full copy is available from the office

Bullying is repeated aggression: verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or groups against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying. (Department of Education and Science guidelines, 1993, p.6).

Examples of the main types of bullying which can occur are:

- Physical aggression: Hitting, kicking, subtle bumps, punching, tripping, spitting, scratching, performing humiliating acts on someone, damage to property, hiding property, forcing sharing of property.
- Social/emotional: Spreading rumours/nasty stories about someone, making fun of someone, forming "cliques", whispering/sniggering, excluding from play.
- Verbal/name calling: Dirty looks and ges-

In regard to the procedures for noting and reporting an incident of possible bullying involving one of the children in the outreach classes, teachers and staff in the unit will be

consulted first. They will, in close consultation with the school management, proceed to deal with the situation appropriately.

Healthy Eating Policy

In Lucan Educate Together, we strive to promote healthy eating amongst the pupils in our everyday teachings. Healthy eating is part of the curriculum of Social Personal Health Education (SPHE), which is taught in all classes. As part of this curriculum, our schoolchildren are helped to appreciate the need to care for the body in order to keep it healthy and strong. Nutrition is one of the issues explored at each class level. Children are helped to understand that balance, regularity and moderation are necessary in the diet. Areas addressed include: the food pyramid, the need for a balanced diet, the importance of having an appropriate intake of liquids, and awareness of food that is healthy for some people and not for others. We aspire to help each child take some responsibility for his/her health by encouraging positive choices in relation to diet.

To support our healthy eating policy, we ask that parents/guardians provide children with a healthy lunch each day. An example of a healthy lunch is as follows:

- Snack time: a piece of fruit and a drink.
- Lunchtime: a sandwich, a yoghurt, a piece of fruit, a drink.
- We would encourage all children to bring a water bottle with them to school.

We request that children do not bring fizzy drinks to school.

Healthy eating during the school day promotes good concentration and alertness. Treats and drinks which have high sugar lev-



els affect concentration and can cause surges and dips of energy.

As a reward system for eating healthily throughout the week, we view Friday as a "treat day", when children can, in addition to the above, bring a treat in their lunchbox.

As a general principle, our teaching staff do not reward good behaviour and work in the classroom with treats. As well as praise and encouragement, examples of rewards given to children include stickers, picking a small toy out of a "goodie bag", and personal certificates. At times, our teachers will reward children with a small treat/sweet on a Friday and we ask that parents/guardians let staff know if they do not want their child to be given treats.

Discipline Policy

In our school, we recognize that a safe, orderly environment is essential for pupil learning and to facilitate the smooth day-to-day functioning of the school.

In LETNS, we have four general rules of positive behaviour, which are displayed in the classrooms and taught to all children:

- (1) Take care.
- (2) Be on time.
Be prepared.
- (3) Know when...
to take turns
to talk
to listen
to walk, etc.
- (4) Do the best in
all you can.

We promote positive behaviour. Members of our school community are encouraged to seek out, encourage and reinforce the positive actions of others. Staff, for example, make a point of trying to observe children being good and praise them or reward them for this, placing the focus of attention in the classroom on the majority of children who behave appropriately. A half hour period is set aside at the end of each week for "golden time". During this period, children engage in fun activities as a reward for their positive efforts.

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) is taught in all classes. The Primary Curriculum (1999) states that SPHE: "fosters the personal development, health and well-being of the child and helps him/her to become an active and responsible citizen in

society". Many of the skills fostered by the SPHE program, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, communication and self-awareness are central to the promotion of positive behaviour within the school. Approaches such as talk and discussion (circle time), drama and co-operative games are used to achieve the objectives of the SPHE curriculum.

Children are aware that misbehaviour has clear, consistent consequences and that failure to keep rules or to behave well with incur consequences. This is a way of *holding children accountable for their behaviour and promoting self-discipline.* Individual records of each child's behaviour, both in the classroom and in the yard, are kept and maintained by the class teacher and Principal.

The following procedure for sanctions is displayed on each classroom wall:

When rules are infringed or broken, the following procedure applies:

- (1) The child is called to attention by their first name, the interfering action is named – reference is made to the rule that is broken. The child is asked to resume work and co-operate. Apologise to class.
- (2) As above, but the child is reminded that this is the second time that he/she has not co-operated. Apologise to class. The child's name is recorded.
- (3) Child is asked to help the class by sitting out (designated time out space). Child is asked to return to the class when he/she has decided to co-operate. Apologise to class. There is also the option of sending the child to another class under the supervision of another teacher.

(4) Two sit out periods in one day or a large number in a given period; say a week, means a note is sent home in the journal. The parent is asked to take the appropriate action and a meeting with the parent may be requested.

(5) RED LETTER DAY. If behaviour persists a letter is sent home indicating to parents the troublesome behaviour. Parents are asked to take action. A meeting is arranged with the parents, class teacher and principal.

(6) If step 5 has been ineffective, the case is brought before the Board of Management. Suspension takes place on a temporary basis under the terms of Rule 130 (5).

(7) Expulsion occurs if Step 6 has been ineffective and is under the terms of Rule 130 (6).

Our whole school body, including the children, were involved in writing our school's



discipline policy. This policy is due to be reviewed in 2005-6, again with the input of all. While we emphasize individual and collective responsibility for discipline, we note that day-to-day responsibility for discipline rests with the Principal and staff. Children are responsible for their own behaviour, and we ask that parents support the staff's efforts to maintain discipline.

Learning Support Policy

In our school, Learning Support is organised to optimise the teaching and learning process. We do this in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

The principal aims of Learning support are:

- To enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level;
- To develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils;
- To enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners;
- To provide supplementary teaching and

additional support and resources for these pupils in English and Mathematics;

- To involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent-support programmes;
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for these pupils;
- To establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

Screening:

Pupils are tested in whole-class situations in winter and summer. Tests include NRIT (non

reading intelligence tests), Standardised English and Mathematics tests - Micra and Sigma T - and school-based mathematics tests. Tests are either administered in November or in May/June as recommended by the Department of Education & Science.

Having administered, scored and evaluated the test results, consultation with the class teacher leads to the selection of children in need of help. This is followed by a meeting with parents/guardian to explain the

process: whereby the child is given individual tuition outside his/her class lessons, for a period, usually 30 minutes, to help him/her improve. Naturally situations will arise whereby a teacher experiences a child having difficulty in class and suggests intervention. Causes for a child to fall behind can vary from recent illness to the introduction of a new concept or topic. The above procedure is then applied.

Enrolment Policy

Junior Infants:

We have two classes of Junior Infants, with places for 60 children altogether. Ninety percent (90%) of the available places are filled from a waiting list of pre-enrolled children, on a *first-come, first-served basis*. Currently, once their child is born, parents/guardians can fill out an application form to place the child on the pre-enrolment list. The child must be 4 years old on or before the 31st of May of the year s/he is due to start school. A record of the pre-enrolment list is kept confidentially in the school office.

The remaining ten percent (10%) of the available places are allocated on a discretionary basis, as outlined below. Parents/guardians may normally apply for a discretionary place in January of each year. Please enquire at the school office to confirm the exact timing of this.

Discretionary places may be offered to:

- Refugees.
- Children of traveller families.
- Adopted/fostered children.
- Children with special needs – provided that these needs can be specifically

catered for by the Department of Education and Science.

- Children with family members already in the school, whose names were placed on the pre-enrolment list in good time.

The above list may be amended at the discretion of school management to cater for changing circumstances within our community. Discretionary places will only be allocated to children who are on our pre-enrolment list. *It is the duty of the parent/guardian to ensure that their child's name is placed on the pre-enrolment list in good time.* Failure to do so may disqualify a child from gaining a discretionary place.

As the criteria for offering discretionary places may involve personal details of families within our community, decisions and allocation of places will remain confidential and will not be made public.

Deferring an offered place:

When offered a place for their child in Junior Infants, if parents/guardians decide they do not want to start their child in school that year, they may defer acceptance of that place to the following year. This may only be done once. The child's name is then



placed on the following year's pre-enrolment list, positioned by date of original application for pre-enrolment. As places are allocated by date order (i.e., first-come, first-served), there is no guarantee that the child will be offered a place the following year, as it depends on how many children are on the pre-enrolment list before that date. However, usually the child is placed in a similar position to the previous year.

Senior Infants to Sixth Class:

Pre-enrolment for Senior Infants up to Sixth

class opens on 1st September each year for the following academic year only. We work only one year forward with this list and places will be offered from the pre-enrolment list only. The Board of Management will have complete discretion in offering a place in these classes. Factors such as class size and teacher appointments may determine the criteria under which places are offered.

There is a separate pre-enrolment list for the **Outreach classes**. For further details, please enquire at the office.

Dress Code for Children and Staff

According to our Educate Together Ethos, ***all children and staff in LETNS are welcome to wear clothes that suit their own personality, tastes and preferences, influenced by their individuality, culture, religion and gender.***

Our school management does not expect any child attending LETNS to wear a particular uniform at any time.

However, for Physical Education (P.E.) and sports activities/events, we do recommend that children dress in appropriate sports clothes and footwear (for e.g., tracksuit or comfortable trousers, and trainers).

In general, in the interest of the children's safety and comfort, we ask parents to make sure their child wears suitable clothes and shoes. In relation to this, we discourage the wearing of belly-tops, high-heel shoes, hoop-rings and make-up.

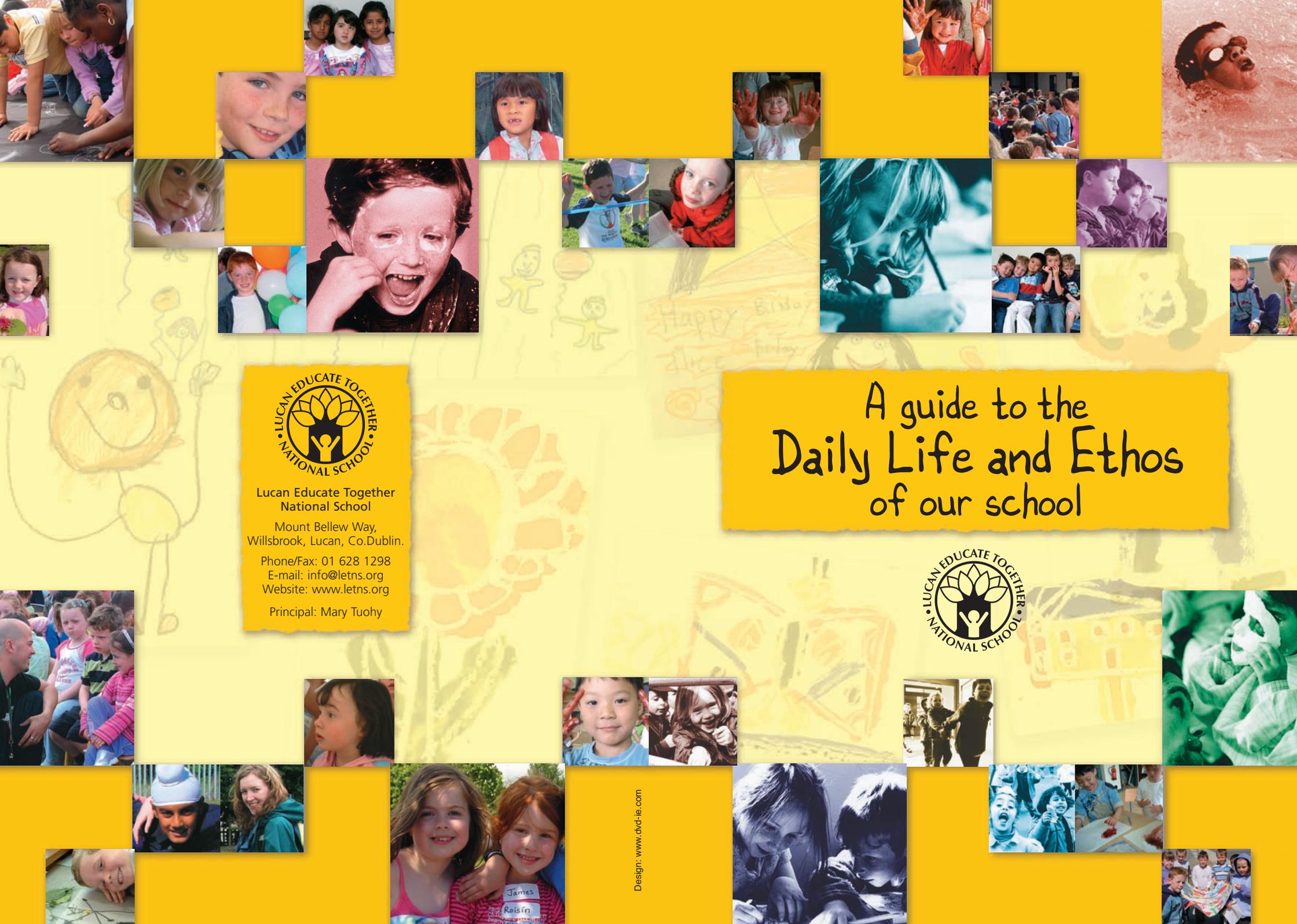
We ask parents to label their child's clothes and jacket/coat clearly, as the school takes no responsibility for any lost clothes. If a child has lost any items of clothing, parents/guardians can check the lost property box in each classroom and in the main hall of the school. At the end of each school

year, the clothes left behind in the lost property box are donated to charity.

From September 2005, an **optional school tracksuit** is available for those who wish to purchase it for wear in school generally or in P.E. classes. This optional tracksuit can be purchased with the school logo attached on its chest. The tracksuit is green in colour, with gold piping, and is suitable for both girls and boys. The tracksuit can be purchased from a supplier in Leixlip - details of this are on the school noticeboard.

The school tracksuit with logo is **optional** and has been organised by the democratic vote of the parent body rather than by school management. ***It is not required for P.E.***

As is the case for the children, our **staff** are free to wear clothes and jewellery of their own choice, with appropriate awareness for the comfort and safety of themselves and the children. For instance, staff are free to wear items related to their religion or creed (for e.g., a cross or a head-dress), as this respects our multid denominational expression. Our staff understand to wear clothes that are suitable for a school setting.



Lucan Educate Together
National School
Mount Bellew Way,
Willsbrook, Lucan, Co.Dublin.
Phone/Fax: 01 628 1298
E-mail: info@letns.org
Website: www.letns.org
Principal: Mary Tuohy

A guide to the Daily Life and Ethos of our school



Design: www.dvd-ie.com