



Educate Together Second-level Campaign 2021 - Booterstown/Blackrock/Dun Laoghaire

Public Meeting Monday 9th November 2020 - Questions & Answers

Common Queries Answered:

- (1) The school will open for 1st Years only in 2021, and will grow from there.
The number of 1st Years that can be enrolled for 2021, will depend on the accommodation provided by the Department of Education.
There is generally 24 students in each class.
- (2) Admissions policy will prioritise children living in the catchment area, and will not have feeder schools.
- (3) Educate Together schools are not fee paying. They are funded by the Department of Education like all other voluntary secondary schools, and teachers are paid by the Department of Education.
- (4) Educate Together schools follow the national curriculum.
- (5) In Educate Together schools students follow an Ethical Education curriculum, which includes themes on values, worldviews and belief systems, global citizenship education, diversity, migration and equality. Our ethos provides a strong moral, ethical framework for the whole school community, and informs all policies and practices in the daily life of the school.
- (6) Educate Together is committed to opening additional needs units. The ability to open a class for September 2021 will depend on the accommodation available in September. The permanent school building will have capacity for additional needs units.
- (7) Educate Together secondary schools will not have a compulsory uniform but an agreed dress code which promotes safety, learning and equality. The principals and boards of management will consult with the whole school community to decide on an agreed dress code for the school.

Q: Is the final decision for patronage down to the Dept of Education or will it be the community majority vote?

A: The community majority vote is a key decider in the Department's recommendation to the New Schools Establishment Group. This group then review the Department's report along with diversity in the school planning area, and based on these factors, they make their recommendation to the Minister for Education.

The vote and numbers for each patron is very important – it's so important to vote, as every vote does count, and campaigns have been won on very small margins in the past.

Q: Does the curriculum differ from other schools

A: Educate Together schools offer the same curriculum as other schools, but also offer Ethical Education as a subject, which is unique to Educate Together schools.

Active, engaging teaching and learning methods are used throughout Junior and Senior Cycle. Teachers take a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning, helping students to understand the links between subjects and their real-world applications. This enables students to develop research skills, group work skills, time management skills, digital literacy skills, presentation skills and more. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is widely used as a tool for learning across all subject areas.

Q: How much involvement are you expecting from the parents, what form?

A: Educate Together schools operate on a democratic basis, encouraging active participation by parents and students in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers. All members of the school community are invited to participate in the management process through membership of the Board of Management, Student Council and Parents Association. The school Principal provides dynamic, positive leadership, with students, teachers and parents encouraged to participate in the policy-making and planning. Parental involvement in school life is voluntary.

Q: How much variety in subjects can we expect to be offered by a new school? Would the students be able to drive the availability of these if they requested them?

A: New schools strive to offer a variety of subjects and extracurricular activities, even in temporary accommodation. Most temporary accommodation will have Science, Home Economics Art and Technology rooms. In addition, many short courses are offered as part of the Junior Cycle programme. Student voice is central to Educate Together schools.

Extracurricular: Students participate in a variety of sporting activities, both indoor and outdoor, team and individual. Students are encouraged to join one of the many clubs on offer, such as foreign languages, cookery, film, drama, art and craft, chess, music, science and technology. Students also have opportunities to participate in programmes such as the Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, Young Social Innovators and the Gaisce Awards.

Q: How do the schools perform in the Leaving Cert?

A: Many of our Educate Together Second-level schools are quite new, so we have limited Leaving Cert results to date. Really, the best evidence of academic practices taking place in our schools is to go to Department of Education website and look at inspection reports for the schools. These point to excellent teaching and learning taking place in our schools. League tables in the Sunday Times once a year are a narrow measurement of the success of a school.

Student's achievements are taken seriously and the large focus on teaching and learning and developing critical skills are been observed in Departmental inspections.

(<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Finding-Inspection-Reports.html>)

Q: Does technology replace school books, or is it that technology compliments traditional paper-based learning?

A: Paper based learning has not been replaced, and the art of handwriting and presentation are very important. Some schools use iPad ebooks and others have teacher create the content. In all cases technology is used to enhance learning – it opens up the learning and allows students to both access learning and create their own content, and thus control their own learning.

Stepaside Educate Together Secondary School demonstrates this well in this video here: (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1091631174572052>)

Q: What positives are there to choosing a new school over an established school?

A: Whilst there may be limitations initially with the physical space, the school environment will be small and will grow with the students. The teacher-pupil ratio is often smaller which can enhance the opportunity for developing the respectful and meaningful relationships that are central to Educate Together schools. The whole school community is starting out on the journey together in creating the vision for the school.

Passion and dedication exists in the new schools. The Educate Together second-level blueprint is very innovative and is lived out in our schools.

Q: How do Educate Together manage the new fabric of our multi-racial society?

A: Educate Together schools welcome and celebrate diversity. A recent ESRI study found Educate Together Secondary Schools found to be more diverse on average, and alongside this diversity, students expressed strong feelings of inclusivity and belonging within their schools, and very high self-reported rates of respecting people from other cultures.

The research also found a strong culture of respect at the core of relationships between students and teachers, supported by the use of restorative practices to behaviour and discipline.

(<https://www.esri.ie/publications/examining-the-experiences-of-students-teachers-and-leaders-at-educate-together-second>)

Accommodation

Q: When do expect it would be built, do you expect prefabs for long?

A: The site has been acquired by the Department of Education so that is a positive and generally speeds up the process. It is likely that the school may open in temporary accommodation on the permanent site for next September. However, the Department will not engage with patrons with regards to accommodation, until patronage awarded. The length of time to permanent building largely depends on the planning process.

Q: What typically would you expect the site size to be for a 1000 pupil secondary school? Is 3 acres quite small?

A: Urban sites can often be quite limited. For example, the site for Sandymount Park Educate Together Secondary School is only 4 acres, and that will also include a primary school on the same site. The Department plans will take this into account and be creative with the space available.

Patronage Process

Q: If we voted for another school body and now want to change our mind, is it too late?

A: We are not sure. It would be best to try it again but it is our understanding that the last vote you enter is the one that is counted.

Q: Is the Dept circulating details of the new school and options re patronage to primary schools in the area to reach as many parents as possible?

A: No, the Department does not circulate or promote information to parents in area. It is left up to patrons to promote the process as part of their bid for patronage.