

Kilcolgan Educate
Together N.S.

Parent's
Handbook

Please read this handbook carefully and keep
as a reference during the year.

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Kilcolgan Educate Together National School

Kilcolgan Educate Together National School is part of the Department of Education and Science National School system and is run in accordance with Department of Education regulations. It is subject to the Department of Education Rules for National Schools governing the curriculum, class sizes, teacher appointments, training and recruitment etc. The basic difference between it and national schools in the denominational sector is that patronage is vested in Educate Together, the representative body for this sector.

Educate Together offers advice and support to new schools and makes representations to the Department of Education on behalf of all our schools. As patron its role is also to promote the aims and objectives of the school, which are to establish a school that is

- ☺ Multi-denominational
- ☺ Co-educational
- ☺ Child centred
- ☺ Democratically run

The main task of the Educate Together Patron is to ensure that the ethos and characteristic spirit of the school is maintained.

Multi-denominational

All children have equal rights of access to the school. Children from any social, ethnic or cultural group and all religious and non-religious backgrounds are equally respected.

The Learn Together Curriculum is delivered covering a wide range of religious, moral, social and ethical issues, with no specific emphasis on any one religion.

Co-educational

The school is committed to encouraging all children to fulfil their potential irrespective of gender. Every effort is made to ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys. Gender stereotyping is avoided.

Child centred

The school offers a child-centred education in which the teacher facilitates and guides the child's learning through both formal and informal methods, while encouraging the child to be an active participant in his/her own learning. Each child is encouraged to learn at his/her own pace and individual learning needs are met in so far as class size allows. Interaction between teacher, child and parent is actively encouraged.

Democratically run

The school is run by the Board of Management and parents are encouraged to play active roles on the board and on committees etc.

The Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for the day to day running of the school and its finances.

It is set up and run according to the *Rules for Boards of Management of National Schools* as laid down by the Department of Education and Science.

It consists of eight people as follows:

- The chairperson and one Educate Together director (both are appointed by the patron)
- Two parent nominees elected by the parent body (one male and one female)
- The school principal and one teacher from the teaching staff
- Two wider community representatives elected by the six appointed members.

The board members then agree to take on certain roles such as treasurer and secretary.

The board meets regularly and sub groups and committees of the board meet when necessary.

Funding

The Department of Education pays the teacher's and the special needs assistants' salaries and a capitation grant for each pupil. This capitation grant only partially covers the running costs of the school so the Board of Management is responsible for making up the shortfall, just as the parish does in denominational schools.

By law, this shortfall cannot be levied on parents and must therefore be raised through both voluntary contributions and fundraising activities. Fundraising events can also provide an enjoyable social focus for parents and children (quiz nights, fairs etc.)

It is important that parents and guardians support the voluntary contribution system and fundraising activities of the Board of Management to the greatest extent possible to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the school.

Ethos

The ethos of the school is based on the four principles of Educate Together as mentioned earlier. They can be very easily summarised as ABCD

All faiths and none

Both genders

Co-educational

Democratic

A high value is also placed on good character. There are six pillars of character that the school encourages and the children will learn about them regularly. They are:

Trustworthiness

Respect

Responsibility

Fairness

Caring and

Citizenship

In Kilcolgan Educate Together, we acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and encourage DIVERSITY

Different

Individuals

Valuing

Each other

Regardless of

Skin

Intellect

Talent or

Years

Self-esteem

It is one of the aims of the school to foster, in partnership with parents and guardians, a healthy sense of self-esteem in each child. According to Tony Humphreys, there are two central dimensions to self-esteem;

- The feeling of being loveable and
- The feeling of being capable

In terms of their academic growth, children with high self-esteem are characterised by

- retention of natural curiosity
- eagerness to learn
- love of challenge
- ability to focus on the here and now
- acceptance of failure and mistakes as opportunities for learning
- tolerance of criticism
- competition with self not with others
- acknowledgement of strengths not weaknesses
- enjoyment of academic effort
- positive receptivity to reasonable demands and sanctions for irresponsible action

Denominational Instruction

The school offers its premises outside of school hours for those parents who wish their children to receive religious instruction in their own faith. These classes will be organised by parents.

The Curriculum

The curriculum followed is that set out by the Department of Education and Science. It is broadly based, encompassing the core subjects of English, Irish and Maths as well as Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (History, Geography and Science), Arts Education (Music, Visual Arts and Drama), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education. These are taught both as separate subjects and in an integrated way across the whole curriculum. All children participate in all subjects from junior infants through to sixth class.

We have an ethical education curriculum called Learn Together developed especially for Educate Together schools.

Learn Together

The ethical curriculum supports and implements the guiding principles and ethos of the school by covering a wide range of religious, moral, social and ethical issues, with no specific emphasis on any one religion.

The knowledge and attitudes which the children derive from either their own religious or non-religious philosophies and beliefs are a significant resource which may be drawn on.

The ethical curriculum is divided into four broad strands:

1. Moral and Spiritual Development
2. Equality and Justice Issues
3. Belief Systems
4. Ethics and the Environment

The School Day

The school day begins at 9.00am and finishes at 1.40pm for junior and senior infants and at 2.40pm for all other classes.

Junior Infants go home at 12.00 for the first two weeks to facilitate settling in, so please do not send full lunches – a drink and snack will suffice.

Children should be on time for class at 9.00am. The school will open its doors at 8.50 to facilitate drop off.

Children should be collected promptly at the appropriate time. Teachers cannot be asked to supervise children after school.

The teacher **must** be informed of any changes in collection arrangements i.e. the identity of the person collecting the child at all times.

Children have a ten minute 'little break' and a thirty minute break for lunch and recreation. Please send a healthy packed lunch and plenty of water or milk. The school actively discourages foods high in sugar and salt as these provide little or no nutritional value.

To facilitate school planning and in-career staff development, a staff meeting is held every first Friday of the month. The school closes at 12.00 on these days. Please refer to the school calendar and notice boards for information.

Clothing

There is no school uniform. Children should wear comfortable clothing which they can manage (i.e. they should be able to button, zip etc.) **No laces** please until they can tie them.

Parents are reminded of the importance of appropriate footwear in school. The children should wear sturdy, supportive and sensible (flat) footwear (such as runners). Any other footwear poses a potential danger to children when they use the stairs or play in the yard.

Similarly clothing should be dignified and appropriate for all possible school activities. At all times clothing should be comfortable and allow for free movement. Bear in mind that teachers may organise an impromptu PE lesson or walk.

The wearing of jewellery is actively discouraged in the school for safety reasons. If your child wears jewellery to school he/she may be asked to remove it. The school will not be responsible for the loss of items of clothing or jewellery.

To that effect we ask that **all belongings (coats, bags, lunchboxes etc.) have the child's name clearly marked on them.**

Toys

The infant classes will have a designated 'sharing day' when they can bring in an appropriate, small, **pocket-sized** toy to share with the other children.

On other days, if the children bring in toys or comforters, they must be kept in their bags.

It is important to be aware that toys may get lost or broken in the playground and leave a child distressed for the rest of the day.

Computer or electronic toys are not allowed as they do not promote social activity.

As peace education is an integral part of our ethical curriculum, we would ask for your co-operation in not allowing your child to bring toys or games to school that are associated with violence (guns, toy soldiers etc). These toys and games contradict our work with the children in this area.

Mobile Phones

Parents can contact their children via the school phone during the day in the event of an emergency. The school will contact the parents during the school day in the event of an emergency at school.

If your child must have a mobile phone at school please inform the principal. Any child who brings a phone to school without having received express permission from the principal will have his/ her phone confiscated. It will only be returned to a parent/ guardian (not the child) who will have to collect the phone from the principal.

Lunches

To reinforce the Health Education Programme, which the pupils will be covering during the year, you are asked not to include foods or drinks high in sugar or salt in the children's lunches.

For safety reasons chewing gum, fizzy drinks and glass bottles are not permitted.

We ask that children bring home any wrappers, yoghurt cartons etc. after their lunches in order to minimise waste disposal.

If your child has food allergies, please ensure that they are aware of what they can and cannot eat as children occasionally share lunches informally.

Birthdays

Invitations to parties must be distributed outside of school unless there is an invitation for every child in the class. Teachers cannot be asked to distribute invitations as children who are not invited feel isolated and upset.

Each class teacher has their own class policy on celebrations in the classroom in keeping with the SPHE and Learn Together curricula. Parents who do not want their child present for such celebrations should speak to their child's teacher.

Sometimes parents of the birthday child send in cake or buns for the whole class. We ask that parents limit this to one small item per child and do not send lollipops, sweets or crisps but rather cake or buns. These are distributed only after the children have eaten their normal lunch first.

School Books and Materials

Booklists are generally distributed before the summer holidays. Parents are given the option of purchasing books through the school. The school asks parents to pay a portion of the photocopying costs and some of the costs of art and craft materials.

For the first day of school junior infants will need

- drink and food for lunch (see also 'Starting School' booklet)

Senior infants will need

- colouring pencils or crayons (not markers)
- a sharpener
- food and drink for lunch

All other classes will need

- pencil case with 2 HB pencils
- a sharpener
- an eraser
- a ruler
- one biro
- colouring pencils or crayons
- drink and food for lunch

Note: Please put name tags on **all** items

Homework

Homework assignments foster initiative, develop independent learning skills and allow time for practice, application and consolidation of what has been learned in school. Parents and guardians are encouraged to show an interest in their child's homework, so that by extending the child's learning from classroom to home a powerful link is forged between teacher and parent.

Homework assignments will be recorded in the Homework Journal. Parents and teachers can use the Homework Journal for communication purposes. Junior Infants do not have a homework journal. Rather they have a homework folder in which their homework is kept. Children will know what has been set for them.

It is vital that you listen to your child read every day regardless of their reading ability. Please set aside just a few minutes to do this – the benefits are huge. If your child cannot yet read independently you may read to him/ her or share the reading. Please see your child's teacher if you would like more advice on how to do this.

Homework will generally be set Monday – Thursday. Good behaviour may result in a 'homework pass' whereby the whole class or a child may be exempt from homework. Extra work may be assigned for very challenging or uncooperative behaviour, in line with the school policy on conduct. This will generally require the signature of a parent.

Guidelines for homework:

Junior and Senior Infants	10-15 minutes
First and Second class	up to 30 minutes
Third and Fourth class	30-45 minutes
Fifth and Sixth class	up to 1 hour

Please see your child's teacher if you have any concerns about homework. The school also has a detailed Homework Policy.

Illness and Absences

Parents are requested not to send their child to school if they are sick. It is vitally important that you inform the school of any ongoing medical condition that your child may have (see medical policy available in school). Please also inform the school if your child has a contagious illness including headlice so that parents can be informed of symptoms. This will be treated with sensitivity (your child will not be named).

A note or phone call should follow a child's absence from school. The school is obliged to report to the National Welfare Education Board (NEWB) when a child has been absent for twenty days in the school year. This includes all absent days including sick days. The school uses a code when reporting to the NEWB:

- A - Illness
- B – Urgent Family Reasons
- C - Expelled
- D – Suspended
- E – Other (holidays, religious observance etc)
- F – Unexplained
- G – Transfer to another school

It is therefore vital that you explain the reason for your child's absence as soon as possible. The school is asked to provide detail in relation to codes A and E.

Your child may be marked absent if he or she comes to school late i.e. after the roll has been called. If you are running late, please phone the school to avoid your child being marked absent, as absence marks cannot be changed.

An emergency contact number should be supplied so that parents/guardians can be contacted during the school day, should an emergency arise.

Medical Policy

The following contains excerpts from the Medical Policy. Please contact the school for a full version.

Infection in school

Infections in school children are common. However, not all infectious diseases are contagious. In the case of contagious diseases (chicken pox, infective hepatitis, measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), scarlet fever, glandular fever, whooping cough, impetigo (school sores), ringworm (tinea), head-lice, scabies), all parents/ guardians will be informed by letter. If you discover that your child has an infectious disease please inform the school immediately, especially in the case of an illness which may affect other children. Please keep your child away from school until he/ she is clear of infection and check with your GP when your child is fit to return to school. Head-louse infection is a regular problem in the classroom. Please keep your child at home until he/ she is fully clear of the problem.

First Aid

From time to time minor incidents such as cuts and abrasions etc. will occur. The staff at the school will deal with these by washing the cut, cleaning with an antiseptic and if necessary applying a plaster.

Please complete the Permission Slip for basic First Aid to be administered to your child. If for any reason you do not want us to treat cuts etc, please state this clearly on the form. You will then be contacted at home or work if your child needs attention.

Administration of Medicines

You are required to complete the form detailing any medical information that may affect your child while at school. The Board of Management requires that parents inform their child's teacher in writing of any medical condition their child may have. It is the parent's/ guardian's responsibility to notify subsequent teachers. While the Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of pupils when they are engaged in authorised school activities this does not imply a duty upon teachers to personally undertake the administration of medicines.

Under normal circumstances* no oral medicine or tablets will be administered by the staff. This includes medicines which have been prescribed by your own doctor for your child. If your child is ill enough to require medicine while in school, please keep him/ her at home until the treatment is completed.

Children are not permitted to keep medication in their own possession. Parents/ guardians may think it appropriate on certain occasions for older children to bring medicines into school (e.g. Paracetamol). The class teacher must be informed in writing if your child is carrying medicine of any sort (including cough sweets, cold-sore creams and other pharmaceuticals). The note should identify the medicine and give the child permission to self-administer it. However the teacher will store the medicine for the duration of the school day. It is the responsibility of the child to remind the teacher when he/ she needs the medication. The child should only carry the quantity needed for the school day. Where children carry inhalers, they should be competent to self-administer.

*for procedure for parents of children with long term illness requiring administration of medicine within school hours e.g. diabetes, severe allergies refer to medical policy.

School Correspondence

In order to keep you up to date with all the activities in the school, we regularly send home notes and letters in your child's schoolbag. Please check them on a daily basis. If your child has been absent, please remember to check with his/ her teacher to ensure that no notes are missed out on.

The text-a-parent service is also used on occasion so please ensure you inform the school of any changes in mobile numbers.

We aim to publish a monthly newsletter which we send home in the children's bags.

Please keep an eye on the school notice board and the school website www.kilcolganetns.com

We foster responsibility and independence as part of the learning process, so occasionally we expect children to relay certain messages at home without sending this information in written format. When children are asked to bring a message home (such as that they may need to organise a costume/ bring in a photograph etc), the school holds the children responsible for this message. This means if the child comes to school without the costume, the issue is with the teacher and the child. Also for older children extra- curricular activities may be offered without notes home with a view to promoting independent learning. Parents can help their children by encouraging responsibility for these messages. If you find that your child has problems remembering verbal messages from school please speak to the teacher.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

A one to one parent teacher meeting is held early in the second term when teachers report on the child's progress. Two written reports are sent out each year – one at Christmas and one at the end of the year.

We welcome as much informal contact as possible. If your child has any difficulties, academic or otherwise, please let the teachers know immediately.

Please respect that class begins and 9 and finishes at 1.40 or 2.40, and make an appointment to see your child's teacher or the principal outside of this time. Please phone the school if you would like to make an appointment.

If you have any skill and time to spare, the children will benefit greatly from your input during school hours or from extra activities. Even if you feel you have no particular skill, an extra pair of ears or hands is always helpful in the classroom. Please come and talk to us.

Parental Involvement Policy

To clarify the role of the parent or advisor in the school, the following policy applies:

- Any matter relating to any child's ability/academic progress/behaviour in the classroom/yard is privileged to the teacher of that class and the parent of the child. Consequently, strict confidentiality must at all times be respected and adhered to in this regard.
- Any parent who wishes to help should make a prior arrangement with the teacher concerned and except in unavoidable circumstances honour that arrangement.
- Parental input in the classroom remains at all times under the direction of the teacher.
- The teacher will discuss with the parent beforehand the nature and scope of the input offered and particularly the time and date at which it will take place.
- If the parent is unable to fulfil the commitment, adequate notice should be given to the teacher.
- Should any problems arise in the classroom/yard etc. the parent should refer them to the teacher concerned immediately.
- Parental involvement is at all times at the discretion of the Principal of the school and the class teacher concerned.
- School staff will attempt to ensure that no parent or volunteer is left with the children unsupervised.
- To this effect we may ask parents to complete a Garda Vetting form – a full policy on this exists.

Parents and the Board of Management

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of a primary school to manage the affairs of the school in a fair and efficient manner. This includes managing the school's finances, recruiting staff, and ensuring that all relevant legislation and other regulations as determined by the Department of Education and Science and others are complied with. The Board also has a responsibility to communicate with parents, in order to keep them informed of developments in relation to the school.

Meetings of the Board are confidential to members of the Board, who may not discuss Board business with others. The Board nevertheless has a responsibility to communicate matters of relevance to parents. Equally, parents have a right to bring to the Board matters of concern or interest to them and which they feel the Board should discuss. This policy sets down the manner in which the communication from the Board to parents and from parents to the Board should proceed. The intention of this policy is to ensure open and ordered communication between both parties. Parents wishing to make a submission to the board should do so in writing through the Chairperson. Advice on how to make a submission can be sought from the Principal or the Chairperson. Please ensure that if the submission is a complaint, that the complaints procedure has been adhered to.

Policy

- Minutes of the Board are confidential. However, at the end of every Board meeting, members will decide which decisions need to be communicated to parents, and in what manner. This will normally occur through the publication of a periodic newsletter, which will be distributed to all parents.
- It is not appropriate for members of the Board to discuss the business of the Board with individual parents, either formally or informally. Neither is it appropriate for parents to approach individual members of the Board with their concerns.

Complaints Procedure

At Kilcolgan Educate Together positive home-school contacts are promoted, and the right of all stakeholders in education to express their opinion is acknowledged in keeping with the school's ethos. Parents are encouraged to express concern at the earliest possible stage with the class teacher to avoid a build-up of issues. This policy outlines the format with which grievances are dealt with.

This Complaints Procedure was drafted to comply with Section 28 of the Education Act 1998 – procedures for processing complaints by parents prescribed for all schools under the Act.

1. If parents have concerns about their child, the child's teacher should be approached in the first instance. If the concern is not resolved by the teacher, the Principal should be contacted, and a meeting sought to discuss the concerns.
2. If matters are not resolved at this level the matter should be raised with the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The Chairperson will request a report from the Principal with regard to the concerns and attempts to resolve it.
3. If matters are not resolved at this level a letter should be written to the Chairperson, Board of Management, Kilcolgan Educate Together N.S., Kilcolgan, Co. Galway with a request that the issue be discussed at the next convenient Board meeting. The Board will communicate the result of its deliberations in writing to the parent/s that raised it, and with the wider school community should this be considered appropriate.
4. If the school cannot satisfactorily resolve the issue, Educate Together Head Office should be contacted for further advice on the matter. They may advise that the Department of Education be contacted if necessary.

In the case of a matter not directly concerning a child a similar format as outlined above should be observed. That is the person directly involved with the matter is the first point of contact.

A Positive Learning Environment

The school has a central role in the children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development. In seeking to define acceptable standards of behaviour it is acknowledged that these are goals to be worked towards rather than expectations that are either fulfilled or not.

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviour. As a community environment, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for cooperation. Therefore any rules will be age appropriate, with clear agreed consequences.

Parents can cooperate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

Real learning takes place when children are emotionally relaxed and intellectually stimulated.

Please refer to the complete Code of Behaviour for more information and detail.

There are six general school rules that the children are asked to follow. They are:

- ☺ Be nice
- ☺ Be safe
- ☺ Be tidy
- ☺ Listen
- ☺ Walk in the building
- ☺ Do your best

Rewards

Part of the vision of Kilcolgan Educate Together is to help children achieve their personal best - academically, intellectually and socially. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. Reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular extrinsic goals continuously apply to only a limited number of children and undermine the individuality of children. All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work.

Other rewards might include privileges, stickers, homework passes or golden time.

Consequences

In every school today it is accepted that there is a need for consequences to register disapproval of unacceptable behaviour, and teach appropriate behaviour.

The following strategies may be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour:

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class
4. Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened
5. Loss of privileges
6. Detention during break
7. Communication with parents
8. Referral to Principal
9. Principal communicating with parents

Please refer to the school's Code of Behaviour for further information.

School Policies

The school authorities have put in place a number of policies to ensure the efficient running of the school and for the welfare of the children. Some of these include

- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection
- Code of Behaviour
- Complaints Procedure
- Enrolment
- Homework Policy
- Medical
- Garda Vetting Policy

These and other policies being developed will be available in school for parents to view and will be circulated as appropriate.

Policies are regularly reviewed and updated. If you have a particular interest in a specific policy and would like to be involved in the review or formulation of a policy, please speak to the principal or chairperson of the Board of Management.

School Calendar

The Department of Education and Science has now standardised the school year for all schools. Notice of the school calendar will be given as early as possible in the first term and parents will be notified of changes as soon as possible. Please don't forget to inform child-care services of half-days and closures.

Contacts

School Phone Number 091 776595

Address Kilcolgan ETNS, Colgan Court, Kilcolgan, Co Galway

Principal

Anna Eagleton 086 8186289

Chairperson

Melinda Hughes 087 6177397

School Website www.kilcolganetns.com