

The Limerick School Project welcomes you and your family to our school. We hope that this booklet will help your child settle more easily into school life.

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History (The Story of the School)

The Limerick School Project first opened its doors in September 1989 with 2 teachers, Ms Eileen Kennelly, Principal and Ms Orla McCoy. 56 children attended on the first day, ranging from Junior Infants to fourth class. Planning for establishing the Limerick School Project started in 1986 when a small group of parents from Limerick City and its environs who were interested in having a multi-denominational, child centred, co-educational and culturally inclusive school for their children started working towards that aim. Parents were interested in being involved in the management and running of the school as well as participating in classroom activities with their children. Fund raising events and meetings with the Department of Education & Science and local politicians followed to progress the opening. The school was officially opened by Minister Mary O'Rourke in October 1989.

The school was accommodated in a premises leased from the Red Cross at Cecil Street, Limerick. This was originally a Quaker Hall and place of worship and comprised a hall (which was later sub divided into two classroom areas) and two other rooms. The building was really only adequate to accommodate two classes. After two years, additional supplementary school accommodation was obtained at the nearby Employment Exchange which was totally inadequate as a school building with leaking roofs and fungus growing on the walls from the damp. 6 adjacent car park spaces were rented from the City Council to provide a play area for the children in the Employment Exchange. The school continued in these two locations until it moved to the current premises in O'Connell Avenue in September 1996, which was formerly occupied by the VEC and housed the School of Professional Studies. The school was refurbished through DES Grant Aid in 2000.

Staff 2010-2011

Special Needs Assistants: Rebecca Henry, Anne Fitzgerald and Siobhan McNamara

School Secretary: Louise O'Connor

School Caretaker: Ger Griffin

**Teaching Staff: Helen McInerney (Principal)
Orla McCoy (Deputy Principal/Learning Support
Teacher)**

Class teachers:

Junior Infants	Jenni Oakley
Senior Infants	Mairéad Hayden
Rang 1	Emer O'Gara
Rang 2	Mary Ward
Rang 3	Matt Wallen/Collette Neville
Rang 4	Ger O'Connell
Rang 5	Antonia Buckley
Rang 6	Cathy Keyes

Learning Support/Resource Teaching:

Orla McCoy
Mary Gallagher/Lise du Toit
Temporary Post
Part time hours

EAL (English as an Additional Language)

Denise Carey

Timetable, Calendar and Schedules

Calendar: The school calendar is issued in June. This is a listing of dates of staff meetings and school closures for the year. It does not include closures for in-service days (training days for teachers). Notice is put in the Thursday note and on notices in the school as they arise.

School Hours: Junior and Senior Infants: 8.30a.m. to 13.10 p.m. 1st to 6th Class: 8.30 a.m. to 14.10 p.m. School gates and doors are opened to the children at **8.30 a.m.** and children go directly to classrooms. The front door is locked **at 9.10 each** day and access is gained by using the intercom. If you need to collect your child for an occasional appointment i.e. dental etc during the school day it is advisable to allow sufficient time or make our school secretary aware as she may not be in her office at all times.

Breaks: **Small break is 10.10 – 10.20. Big break is 12.15 to 12.45.** Teachers collect the classes from the yard. (Children eat both lunches in class before yard time). Two teachers supervise the yard at breaks times.

Roll-Call: A daily roll call is taken in each class and attendance records are kept by each teacher and filled into school roll books. **Rolls are called at 10.00 a.m.** These documents are stored according to Dept of Education and Science regulations.

Staff Meetings: Staff meetings take place on the **first school Friday** of each month. **School closes at 12 noon on these days.**

Parent-Teacher Meetings: Parent teacher meetings are held in the first term – however parents are welcome to request to meet the class teacher at other times should the need arise.

Useful Things to Know

Absences: A written note from a parent/guardian is required for all absences. A class teacher must inform the Principal when a child has reached 15 days absence in a school year. At this stage, parents receive a letter (attached at rear of booklet) to remind them that the National Education Welfare Board must be informed when a child has accumulated 20 days absence.

Accidents: In the event of significant accidents parents are phoned.

After School Clubs: After school clubs vary from year to year – depending on parental involvement and opportunities arising. The clubs offered most frequently include: Speech and Drama, Basketball, French and Chess, however some of these are open to particular class levels.

Assessment: Children are assessed formally and informally through the school year. Junior Infants do the BIAP which is The Belfield Infant Assessment Profile. Senior Infants take the MIST test which is The Middle Infants screening Test. The standardised tests used in this school are as follows: Drumcondra English and Maths, Sigma Maths and Micra T English and the Parallel spelling Test from first to sixth classes.

Buses: Buses are available to certain parts of the City. If this is of interest, please check with the school secretary to see if routes include your area. Pupils may not go to the shop while waiting for the bus. A school transport grant may be available for those not on bus routes. Please check with the School Transport Section of the DES, Portlaoise Rd, Tullamore, Co Offaly at 0506 21363

Classrooms: Juniors to 2nd Class classrooms are on the right hand side of the corridor facing down (beginning with juniors). 3rd to 6th are on the left hand side (beginning with 6th)

Complaints Procedure: If you have a query or concern regarding a school matter relating to your child, this is the procedure to follow: 1) Always go to the class teacher first. In most cases things can be resolved at that level. The teacher will inform the principal of any serious complaints. 2) If, at that stage, you feel that the issue has not been resolved, you are welcome to

make an appointment with the Principal to discuss the matter. 3) If you still feel unhappy with the outcome, you can then bring your concerns to the Board of Management of the school. In order to do this, the concerns must be put in writing to the Chairperson of the BOM.

Code of Behaviour

The Limerick School Project Code of Behaviour is attached. It is important to read this document with your child and sign your agreement to its implementation. Please return your agreement to the class teacher.

Crèche: There is a crèche available in the school, between 1.10 and 2.10 p.m. for Junior and Senior Infants. Priority is given to siblings, teachers' children and to those travelling by bus. The maximum number of child-places in the crèche is 20. Applications for a place in the crèche may be left in the school office.

Curriculum: The curriculum followed is as laid out by the Department of Education and Science. We do however, differ from other schools in terms of our religious/ethical curriculum. Please read the relevant section on "Ethos and our Ethical Curriculum" for further information.

Environmental Education: Our School has always promoted environmental responsibility awareness. In 2008 we formalised our effort and became part of the International Green Schools Programme. Our first green flag for 'Waste and Waste Management', was awarded on May 24th 2010, an achievement we are all very proud of. We have a very active Green School's Committee, made up of pupils from first to sixth, whose members change every term. Each child in the school will be on the committee at some stage of their time in the LSP. We would strongly encourage parents to get involved where possible; this will have very positive effect as we aim for whole school ownership of the programme. Ethics and the environment is a strand in our Ethical Curriculum programme and by having this active community in the school provides very practical means by which we can put theories discussed in the classroom into practise. It is our aim to instil in children the importance of respecting our environment and for them to become responsible environmental citizens.

Games and Activities:

Swimming is scheduled for the children from 1st to 6th class. Classes are held at the Brothers of Charity Pool in Bawnmore.

Term 1: 2nd and 5th Class
Term 2: 1st and 4th Class
Term 3: 6th and 3rd Class

An additional fee is payable to cover cost of coaching, pool and bus hire. As it is a primary element of the PE programme, a valuable life-skill, and an opportunity for children to develop other social skills and practice self-responsibility, exemption from swimming is only permitted with a medical certificate.

Basket ball is played in school in all classes and the BOM employ a national coach. **Tag Rugby** is played in 5th and 6th classes through coaching from the IRFU. **Dance** classes may be arranged during the school day as part of our P.E. curriculum. There is a small charge for this.

3rd to 5th classes have hurling coaching from the GAA. A **sports fun-day** is held every year in the 3rd term. Our sports day is held in Mary Immaculate College. Teachers and school staff organise and run the activities and parents are very welcome to come along or help on the day.

Children also enter the Limerick Schools Sports Day held in UL in May each year. Qualifying heats are held in LSP and the winners go forward to UL.

For safety and insurance reasons, children must wear track suits and runners for all sporting activities.

First Names: All adults and children in the school use first names.

Fire Drill: A fire drill is held once a term. A practise drill which is announced to the staff and children is held in early September to familiarise new children. Teachers and children are made familiar with the location of the nearest fire extinguisher to their classroom, their means of exit and their assembly station in the yard.

First Aid: The first aid box is kept in the school office and first aid is administered by a trained, designated first aider.

Head lice: We remind parents/guardians to check for head lice regularly. We ask that you would check your child's hair on the first weekend of each month i.e. staff meeting weekend.

Language Support: (English as an Additional Language). Children who come to our school and who do not speak English are entitled to 2 years English language tuition.

Library: Children borrow books from the class library under teacher supervision.

Learning Support/Resource: Our support teachers work in conjunction with the class teacher to ensure that the individual learning needs of each pupil are met. Please discuss with class teacher, should you require any further information on this service.

Lost Property: Any unidentifiable (i.e. unlabelled and not recognised) or unclaimed clothing is kept in lost property for a month and then taken to a local charity shop if not claimed. Writing your child's name on the garment label would be great. Reminders will be put in "the Thursday Note" (see Nuacht).

Milk: There is a school milk scheme in operation. Milk can be ordered and paid for at the start of each term. Leaflets are sent home with interested children.

Nuacht (also called "The Thursday Note") is a news-sheet sent home or emailed every Thursday, generally given to the youngest child of each family. This contains news and information about activities in the school and is the primary communications tool of the school. Parents and guardians are encouraged to look through the Nuacht each week to keep informed of what we are up to ☺ Items that YOU might like to include in the Nuacht must be given in to the school office before 2.30 p.m. each Wednesday.

Permission Slips: Parents are requested to read and sign the permission form included in this pack. These consents give permission for internet use, taking of photographs, display of photographs and work on the internet and the Stay Safe Programme and cover your child's time in the Limerick School Project. Please return signed forms to your child's class teacher. Parental Consent forms relating to swimming and local trips issue to all children each September.

Queries - Who do I Ask? As a rule of thumb, if you have a query that is class-related, or relating to a classroom activity, please bring it to the class teacher. If you have a more general query, please bring it to the school secretary. This usually also applies to monies being collected for various activities.

Rubbish Home: As part of our recycling policy, recycling of paper, cardboard, etc. is actively encouraged. Pupils are also asked to take home uneaten food and wrappers in their lunch-boxes to help reduce the school's bin charges. Battery, ink cartridges, mobile phone, CD and stamp recycling is available to the school community at all times. We notify parents/guardians through the Nuacht of recycling opportunities organised by Limerick City and County Councils. The Limerick School Project was awarded its first Green Flag on May 24th 2010. (See Environmental Education section)

Reports: These are posted to parent(s)/guardian(s) in June. The class teacher will request a stamped addressed business envelope for this purpose. Children's reports are stored in secure filing cabinets.

Staff Absences: If a staff member is absent through illness, all efforts are made to get a qualified substitute teacher. Only after all efforts have failed, is a class divided among all available class teachers.

Sammy Stamp: (Credit Union Saving Scheme) To encourage the habit of saving, children are given the option of taking a savings card and filling in savings stamps each week. Stamps are 50c and are sold weekly by a parent volunteer. The money saved can be redeemed at any stage from the volunteer – or directly from the Caherdavin Credit Union.

Special Needs Assistants: There are a number of special needs assistants working in the school. They are assigned duties within a classroom - specifically assisting particular children with special needs.

Telephone: Pupils are not permitted to use mobile phones to make contact with parents/guardians during the school day. They may use the school office phone for emergencies. Pupils are requested not to ring parents during the school day to change their "going home" arrangements. Ringing to ask permission to invite another pupil home or visit another house after school

can put pressure on parents/guardians to make quick decisions. Please make these plans from home.

Tours: School tours are arranged in the 3rd term of each year. Interest level and distance influence the choice of venue – especially for the younger pupils. Parents are requested in advance to give written permission.

Talks and Special Events: Guest speakers are invited to speak to the children from time to time, e.g. Garda, Red Cross, Barnardos, Environmental Awareness Specialists. Other events during the school year include: write a book week/book fair/Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language week)/assemblies relating to the ethical curriculum/ carol or song services/sports days/educational outings. In recent years we have also gone to the ice-rink at Christmas.

Uniform: While the LSP does not have a uniform for pupils we do ask that children come to school dressed appropriately. Pupils are discouraged from wearing heels or flip flops because of the dangers. We request that children have a coat for yard time and class outings.

Things we Need from You

Books: Book lists are issued to the children in June, to enable parents to purchase the books early. All books should be covered and clearly labelled with the child's name on the front cover before school re-opens. A book grant administered by the DES has been discontinued.

Contact Details for parent(s)/guardian(s)/child-minder(s): Names, addresses and phone numbers are kept in the office. Teachers also have their own records which are kept safely. You are requested to give all changes in address and/or telephone numbers to the class teacher **AND** to the school office. **Please ensure that the office has updated contact numbers for you at all times.** If you change your numbers please tell us first!!!

Collecting Infants: Parents collecting children from Infant classes (1.10) are requested to **please** use the back gate to access the school. Wait for your child at the door leading on to the yard. Please arrive on time as young children can get upset if they have to wait.

Healthy Lunches: We are grateful for your co-operation with the Healthy Lunch Policy.

Homework: Homework is an important element of the school day and is usually set Monday to Thursday. It is carefully planned and prepared and is generally a continuation of a lesson already taught – although sometimes, in the older classes, it may take the form of some research or study. The interest, participation and support of parents/guardians in this area is important. Parents/guardians are obliged to sign children's homework diaries each night. Teachers are always happy to discuss with you any difficulties your child may be experiencing in relation to completion of homework.

Insurance: Parents are notified each September of personal insurance cover available for their children. The school insurance covers pupils for school-related activities- but this cover relates specifically to any area of proven negligence on the part of the school – which is why it may be advisable to also avail of the personal cover on offer. Please complete the form at the beginning of the school year - and return with the relevant fee to the school secretary.

Labels: You are requested to **label** clothes, books, lunch-boxes and all children's property. Writing your child's name on the tags of clothing will help to identify the owner.

Library: LSP encourages parents/guardians to assist and encourage their children to join their local library.

Medication: If your child needs medication during school hours, an indemnity form must be signed to allow the school to administer the medication. Please inform the school if your child has a medical problem, disability or allergy which we should know about.

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement is one of the corner-stones of the LSP and parents are requested and encouraged to get involved with the school at all levels. The Board of Management, PTA, Ethos Committee, fund-raising committee, principal and the class teachers would be delighted to hear from you with any skills (or time) that you feel you could offer to the school. You are most welcome to come into the classrooms to help out - or to accompany us on school outings and tours. (See section on "The Organisation and Running of the School")

Parking: We would like to highlight that parents/guardians should not park in the BUSES pick-up area outside the school door - or block the entrance to the school's staff parking area. Parents parking in the buses pick-up and set-off area are causing serious traffic difficulties – and are endangering the safety of our children, who are getting on and off the buses. Please do not block the back lane leading to our school when collecting your child. This is a public thoroughfare.

Permission Slips: Permission slips are sent home with the children asking for your signed permission for activities, field trips and occasional outings during school time. If we do not receive a signed permission, we cannot bring your child on the trip. The teachers do however bring the children to the park from time to time for nature study etc (depending on weather), to the City Library, Art Gallery etc. Parents are asked to sign a general permission slip in September covering incidental trips that may occur during the school year.

Punctuality: Our school day starts at 8.30am. Pupils are expected to be in class and ready to start work. Arriving late disrupts and distracts the other children and impacts on the child's own learning. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to have your child on time.

Smoking: Please do not smoke on the premises, outside the front door or in the yard.

Upsets or changes in home routine:

Changes at home can affect your child in school. Bereavement, separation, moving house or new babies can all contribute to your child being upset or feeling off form. A quiet **confidential** word with the class teacher or principal could help make life easier for your child in school at these times.

Voluntary Contribution: The reality of operating our school is that the funding received from the Department of Education and Science does not cover the full costs of running the school each year. The onus falls on the parents to make up the shortfall in running costs. While the contribution is a voluntary one (because there will always be people in particular financial difficulty, who genuinely cannot afford this contribution) - it is still communicated as a specified amount. We urge parents, where possible, to view it as a necessary contribution to the school - and to keeping the school operating to the best possible standards for the benefit of their children (going towards costs for classroom resources, heating, electricity, maintenance, insurance, etc.) We can facilitate payment by monthly direct debit and forms are available from the office. It is possible for the school to reclaim tax on voluntary contributions in excess of €250 in a financial year if you are a PAYE worker. The school will contact people where this is a possibility.

School Rules

Rules in the school are kept to the minimum necessary for the relatively smooth and safe running of the school. These include:

Door: The school door is locked at 9:10 a.m. each day. Children may not answer the door under any circumstances.

Gum: Please remind your children that they may not have chewing gum in school. LSP is a gum-free zone.

Healthy Lunch Policy: Sweets, fizzy drinks and chocolate are not permitted in school lunches. Children are encouraged to eat fruit, sandwiches, yogurts, etc. Glass containers are forbidden for obvious safety reasons. See our Healthy Eating Policy attached.

Mobile Phones: Mobile phones are not permitted unless parents have requested in writing and permission granted. Phones must be switched off at all times before school starts, during the school day, on corridors and outside the building while waiting to be collected. Phones taken out of bags will be confiscated by the class teacher and kept in the principal's office until the end of the school week. Children are requested not to bring phones to school - unless it is deemed necessary by parents. Children who need to use the school phone for emergency reasons may ask Louise the school secretary, and bring 50 cent to cover the cost of the call.

PE Equipment: The sports equipment is kept in a locked storeroom. Equipment must never be taken out by the children without teacher/coach supervision. Pupils are not allowed take balls to the yard after school.

Safety in Corridors: Pupils are asked to make way for adults. Both children and adults are required to walk, not run, in the corridors.

Safety in the Yard: The teachers' car park and all areas outside the school gates are strictly out of bounds at all times. The senior yard is out of bounds after 2.10 p.m. Children exiting via the back gate should use the junior yard only. Please do not exit or enter through staff car park.

Ball Playing in the Yard: Ball playing and chasing games are not permitted in the yard after school for safety reasons. If you stop to have a chat with other parents when collecting your child please ensure they stand with you.

Smoking: LSP is a smoke-free zone – no smoking is permitted in the building or the grounds. We ask parents **not** to smoke while waiting for their child.

Policies:

Our school policies outline the school's position and/or current procedures in relation to the following:

- ❖ Arrival and Dismissal of pupils
- ❖ Accidents and Injuries to pupils
- ❖ Administration of Medication
- ❖ Attendance
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Career Breaks
- ❖ Child Protection
- ❖ Code of Behaviour
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Complaints
- ❖ Emergency Closure
- ❖ Enrolment
- ❖ Ethical Curriculum
- ❖ Fire Drills
- ❖ Homework
- ❖ Job-Sharing
- ❖ Parental Involvement
- ❖ Safety Statement
- ❖ Substance Abuse
- ❖ School Tours
- ❖ Use of Mobile Phones

Copies of any of these policies can be requested from Louise, the school secretary, at the office. Some of the policies are included at the rear of this booklet for your information - those are the policies covering Homework, Bullying, Code of Behaviour, Parental Involvement, Administration of Medicine and School Internet Use Policy.

Ethos and Our Ethical Curriculum

LSP is one of a growing number of multi-denominational schools throughout the country. The representative organisation for these schools is called “Educate Together”.

Educate Together aims to meet a growing need in Irish society for schools that recognise the developing diversity of Irish life and the modern need for democratic management structures. In particular, Educate Together guarantees children and parents of all faiths and none equal respect in the operation and governing of education.

The schools operated by the member associations of Educate Together are fully recognised by the Irish Department of Education and Science and work under the same regulations and funding structures as other national schools. However, they have a distinct ethos or governing spirit. This has been defined as:

- **Multi-denominational** i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected
- **Co-educational** and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities,
- **Child centred** in their approach to education: The individual needs of each child will be catered for. Interaction between teachers and children is encouraged and the school aims to help children to develop tolerance, creativity and self-confidence.
- **Democratically run** - with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers

Whilst the concepts of child-centredness and co-educationalism are now widely accepted in Irish primary education, what distinguishes the Educate Together schools is their hard work in developing a culturally inclusive and democratic ethos. The schools are democratically organised and governed. This maximises the potential for building a genuine partnership between the professional, objective role of the teacher and the necessarily personal involvement of the parent in contributing to their children's education. (See: www.educatetogether.ie)

Parents with internet access may wish to subscribe to the E.T. On-Line Newsletter via the website.

LSP draws a distinction between moral/religious education and denominational education. The Ethical Curriculum followed by the school is called “Learn Together” (or “Learn Together to Live Together”) and has four key strands: “Moral and Spiritual”, “Equality and Justice”, “Belief Systems” and “Ethics and the Environment”. Each class teacher has a copy of the Ethical Curriculum which can be borrowed by parents who are interested in seeing more detail.

Denominational Instruction (specific instruction in relation to any particular faith or religion) is facilitated by the school -in that the groups can use the school premises, but is organised by parents outside of school hours.

Your Part in a Democratically-Run School

The Patron: Every national school is required by law to have a Patron. In the majority of Irish schools, the patron is the Bishop. In our case, the Patron is Educate Together. Educate Together nominates 2 members to our Board of Management, one of whom is the Chairperson. Information on Educate Together is available on www.educatetogether.ie

The Board of Management: As in all national schools, LSP has a Board of Management which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and its finances. The Board has members representing the Patron, the teachers, the parents and the community. The Board meets monthly and the minutes are posted on the notice board in the corridor. They are also circulated as part of the Thursday note.

The Parent-Teacher Association: The PTA is a forum for discussion among parents and sometimes a vehicle for communication between parents and the school. The PTA is also invaluable in the activities it organises for the benefit of the children and the school. Annual events include the Halloween Party, the Christmas Fair, and the Plant and Cake Sale in the spring. Parents who are new to the school may find this a rewarding way to begin their eight-year involvement with us.

The Principal and Teaching Staff: At present there is an administrative (rather than a teaching) principal in the school. The teaching staff is appointed by the Board of Management, with the approval of the Department of Education and Science. The staff operates the school in accordance with the DES' "Rules for National Schools"

The School Council: A school council is elected each September. The council is made up of 16 members (one girl and one boy) from each class from 1st to 6th. Infant classes are represented by additional 5th and 6th class pupils. The council meets once a month with the Principal to discuss issues and requests that are relevant to the pupils (from rescuing footballs from the roof, to discussions on Seniors "trespassing" in the Junior's yard) School policies and rules are discussed. Each class adds items for discussion to the agenda.

Ethos Committee:

This committee is made up of parents/guardians and a teacher representative. Their role is to ensure that all elements of the Ethos: *Multi-denominational, Co-educational, Child centred* and *Democratically run* are actively promoted and supported in the everyday activities of the school.

Parental Involvement: Parents and guardians are encouraged to get involved and where interested to stand for election to the Board of Management, PTA, Ethos or Fundraising Committees. In addition, parents are welcome to come into the classroom, under the direction of the principal and teaching staff to share skills and experiences with the children. See attached policy and enclosed Parental Involvement Form.

Green School Committee:

Our School promotes environmental responsibility awareness. We have a very active Green School's Committee, made up of pupils from first to sixth, whose members change every term. Each child in the school will be on the committee at some stage of their time in the LSP. We would strongly encourage parents to get involved where possible; this will have very positive effect as we aim for whole school ownership of the programme.

Funding and the Fund-Raising Committee: The Department of Education and Science pays the teachers and pays a capitation grant for each pupil, which goes towards the school's running costs. As mentioned already (see "Voluntary Contributions") there is a shortfall every year, which necessitates a considerable amount of fund-raising. In addition to encouraging parents to pay the voluntary contribution each term (or monthly by direct debit), we would ask for your generous support of the fund-raising committee which endeavours to raise almost 20,000 Euro each year. The Limerick School Project is always happy to hear from people with ideas and willing to give time to fundraising events.

We thank our parents, the members of various committees and the staff who contributed to this booklet.