



**Schola Europaea**

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**Pedagogical Development Unit**

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## **Non-denominational Ethics syllabus – Primary cycle (P1-P5)**

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<sup>1</sup> The present document takes into account the requests of modification suggested at the JTC meeting in February 2016.

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# Non-denominational Ethics syllabus

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## 1. General Objectives of the European Schools

The European Schools have the two objectives of providing formal education and of encouraging pupils' personal development in a wider social and cultural context. Formal education involves the acquisition of competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) across a range of domains. Personal development takes place in a variety of spiritual, moral, social and cultural contexts. It involves an awareness of appropriate behaviour, an understanding of the environment in which pupils live, and a development of their individual identity.

These two objectives are nurtured in the context of an enhanced awareness of the richness of European culture. Awareness and experience of a shared European life should lead pupils towards a greater respect for the traditions of each individual country and region in Europe, while developing and preserving their own national identities.

The pupils of the European Schools are future citizens of Europe and the world. As such, they need a range of competences if they are to meet the challenges of a rapidly-changing world. In 2006 the European Council and European Parliament adopted a European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. It identifies eight key competences which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, for active citizenship, for social inclusion and for employment:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression

The European Schools' syllabuses seek to develop all of these key competences in the pupils.

This ethics syllabus aims, in particular, to develop communication skills, social and civic competences, a sense of initiative, sensitivity, and the ability to learn how to learn, independently, in a non-dogmatic way.

## 2. Teaching principles

### 2.1 Active learning – the role of the teacher

The teacher helps pupils to become more and more responsible for their own learning. The teacher employs a series of teaching and learning strategies, applying differentiated teaching methods and a wide range of learning resources including digital tools.

Ethics education cannot be a simple teaching of rules of conduct to be applied regardless of the situation or context. It is far from being as unambiguous. Indeed, ethical situations at school only make sense if they allow pupils to envisage different possibilities. Without support from the teacher, when faced with choices and alternatives to resolve, the pupil will often merely rely on his/her own life experiences and values in a way that is often too crude and unsubtle.

It is the role of the teacher therefore to help pupils develop their initial approach and make them consider either complementary or opposing points of view, helping them to understand that apparently absolute rules are merely guides, and that it's important to take into consideration other points of view to provide context which had not initially been considered.

In this way, the teacher avoids descending into dogmatism, without leading towards systematic relativism, which is to make pupils believe that all ideas are equally valid and that morality merely arises from those who express their way of seeing things.

To avoid this pitfall, it is important not to impose an idea of what is good and what is bad, but to help children build their own judgements through individual and collective reflection relating to both precise and generic situations. However, we must not hesitate to convey fundamental ideas, in particular those that are subject to very large convergences in human belief, such as those that are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that transcend cultures or even time.

But to form one's judgement consists above all of learning to reflect on realities for which the pupil is not immediately aware. This is why the role of the teacher is so important. The pupil does not build his hierarchy of values alone. To analyse, draw on examples, put different concepts into words and work out the consequences of different alternatives, the pupil must be equipped and guided.

The word of an adult is itself insufficient for this purpose. The rich resource of literature as well as life experiences will complement and enrich this work.

Whatever his pedagogical choices might be, the teacher should

- not impose a moral code
- refuse any kind of dogmatism
- avoid relativism.

The teacher doesn't dictate values, but instead

- Guides the pupil's thinking so that s/he is guided by their moral compass to develop values (including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)
- Accepts mistakes as stages of learning, just as in other disciplines
- Guides the pupil to think, little by little, by him/herself
- Teaches the child to reject all propositions from those who say (implicitly) "I think for you." (It is necessary to protect the child against this risk as early as primary school).

The aim of ethics lessons can often be to resolve problems relating to “living together” that emerge in class, but in general a distance is necessary between daily life and reflection on ethical issues. There is great value in relying on example situations outside of the immediate experience of the pupils.

It is necessary to

- Introduce problematic scenarios
- Distinguish what can be assessed and what should be learned as a priority, even though it may be difficult to assess in a meaningful way
- Carefully frame the ideas of personal engagement through action, putting in place of principles highlighted: the pupils should learn not to express polemic views outside of school.

As teachers, we endeavour to protect the child so that once s/he is fully grown, s/he will not fall prey to popular sways of opinion.

## 2.2 Integrated teaching and learning

Links and correlations among the different areas of the European School curriculum make learning a more comprehensive and meaningful experience.

In the teaching of the ethics syllabus, a holistic approach allows the elements of teaching sociology, psychology, social psychology, literature, geography, history, science, law, civic education and sports to be integrated.

"Developing positive attitudes" and "Knowing how to resist" are two fundamental pillars of ethics, which focus, using many examples, on problem situations and moral dilemmas.

Behaviours, thoughts and values on which the pillars are based will be considered in a circular approach: it's important that the teacher knows which subjects pupils have already worked on in previous years, but the building of values and attitudes requires a longer-term approach that is not so compatible with fixed learning objectives. Therefore, with a modified approach, pupils can be encouraged to reflect again on themes that have already been studied in previous years.

"Developing positive attitudes" is to

- reflect, based on real situations, how to demonstrate moral values
- identify
  - the moral values that are involved
  - the feelings experienced by others involved
  - obstacles to overcome in order to respect moral values and develop morally positive attitudes

- be able empathise, putting oneself in the place of others, evaluating their desires, expectations and needs; responding when required and when appropriate.

The syllabus indicates the minimum requirements, and offers a number of benchmarks in terms of knowledge and attitudes, but the teacher can also implement other initiatives to offer pupils further opportunities to develop their critical thinking and moral judgment.

Examples of situations involving values and obstacles will be offered in the form of accompanying documents in the annex.

### 3. Learning Objectives

This section sets out the main learning objectives and expected outcomes to be attained at the end of each level.

	<b>Towards independent thinking</b>	<b>Towards shared humanist values</b>
P1	<p>In everyday situations, the pupil is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• express an opinion</li> <li>• speak in a group</li> <li>• listen to the opinions of others.</li> </ul> <p>In case of disagreement the pupil is able to control his behavior.</p>	<p>In daily life, the pupil will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be part of a community and agree to be one among others</li> <li>• show interest in the opinion of others</li> <li>• begin to overcome his/her egocentricity, be open towards others and take care of them with respect, empathy and mutual support</li> <li>• understand that the class and the school are governed by rules that must be respected</li> <li>• understand that school rules are designed to protect him and ensure his well-being.</li> </ul>
P2	<p>Confronted with everyday situations, the pupil is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to all stakeholders</li> <li>• take the floor to express his own opinion.</li> </ul> <p>The pupil is able to take part in a debate guided by an adult.</p>	<p>In daily life, the pupil will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be open to others and be aware of others in a way that goes beyond his/her natural instinct</li> <li>• adapt his behaviour and language according to whom he speaks with</li> <li>• respect the person he's addressing, understanding that speaking and listening are related for there to be an exchange</li> <li>• reflect, at least for a short while, before expressing ideas and views.</li> </ul>
P3	<p>Faced with a range of real and fictitious situations, the pupil is able to:</p>	<p>In daily life, the pupil will be able to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise what s/he shares with others (e.g in terms of similar emotional needs, cultural roots etc....)</li> <li>• identify the views of various stakeholders</li> <li>• identify and understand the feelings and emotions of others and him/herself</li> <li>• not be influenced by his/her favourite peers if necessary</li> <li>• justify his/her own point of view and argue using examples and experiences.</li> </ul> <p>The pupil is able to respect the rules of a debate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participate in the development of rules for the classroom and the school as a whole</li> <li>• develop attitudes towards others determined by positive values (the pupil can expect others to behave in the same way towards her/him).</li> </ul> <p>In everyday situations, the student will understand that the purpose of the rules is to ensure his/her welfare and the welfare of others.</p>
P4	<p>Faced with problems in daily life and the relevant facts relating to current events and key issues (such as metaphysics), the pupil is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observe the coexistence of different possible answers</li> <li>• question his/her initial judgments</li> <li>• in terms of the way society is organised <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ distinguish what is acceptable from what is not</li> <li>○ confront his/her judgment to that of others</li> <li>○ justify his/her choices</li> <li>○ refer to shared values.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The pupil is able to take on different roles in a debate.</p>	<p>In daily life, the pupil will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate respect for the differences of others and to endeavour to create an equal relationship with them</li> <li>• assert him/herself as an individual in a pluralist society by forging and expressing his/her own opinions</li> <li>• realise that the expression of different ways of thinking between individuals benefits themselves, their class and society as a whole</li> <li>• act responsibly, keeping in mind the broad principles of a democratic society.</li> </ul> <p>Faced with an unjust situation at school, the pupil will be able to act calmly for others.</p>
P5	<p>Faced with moral dilemmas, alternatives to consider, conflicting values or choices to be made, the pupil is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider a range of possibilities</li> <li>• accept the existence of multiple points of view and emotions</li> <li>• defend in order to justify one or more relevant points of view.</li> </ul> <p>S/he thus gradually learns to form an independent opinion (which may of course subsequently evolve thanks to the culture s/he will acquire).</p>	<p>The pupil will build on fundamental values (such as those included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or in Convention on the Rights of the Child) that will permit him/her to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overcome egocentrism</li> <li>• develop critical thinking</li> <li>• fight any form of fanaticism.</li> </ul> <p>The teaching and learning will inspire the pupil to make his/her analysis go beyond his/her instinctive reaction and will not only be coloured by his/her own life, feelings and personal experiences.</p>

## 4. Content

The content of the syllabus centres around three areas; values and positive behaviours, the corresponding anti-values and example questions.

The values are divided up by year group to encourage progression from year to year and allow teachers to build on values that will already have been discussed and considered in class.

The anti-values are included for two reasons; firstly they can allow pupils, in the case of quite abstract values, to sharpen their understanding of that value by considering its opposite anti-value. Secondly, the anti-values allow pupils to be able to recognise the behaviours and actions not exhibiting the values.

Teachers may plan any number of contexts or scenarios to allow children to deepen their understanding of these values and their own moral position in relation to them. However, the questions included here in the last column are given as potential starting-points for themed areas of work. They are sometimes deliberately provocative and often take the form of closed questions or questions with seemingly self-evident answers in order to encourage pupils to explore opposing points of view and complex issues.

	<b>Values and positive behaviours</b>	<b>Anti-values and negative behaviours to avoid</b>	<b>Example questions</b>
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Politeness</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Friendship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive egocentricism</li> <li>• Indifference to others</li> <li>• Contempt of others</li> <li>• Mockery</li> <li>• Passivity</li> <li>• Physical harrassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes a family?</li> <li>• How can I be a good friend?</li> <li>• How do we play together?</li> <li>• How do I care for myself?</li> <li>• Do I have to be brave?</li> <li>• Why should I be polite?</li> </ul>
P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing</li> <li>• Non-violence</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Self-reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laziness</li> <li>• Insolence</li> <li>• Selfishness</li> <li>• Violence</li> <li>• Disrespect</li> <li>• Addiction (e.g. to electronic devices or games)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have to protect others?</li> <li>• Do animals suffer?</li> <li>• Do emotions matter?</li> <li>• Do we want to work together?</li> <li>• How can we stay healthy?</li> <li>• How do I want other people to see me?</li> <li>• Could I spend less time in front of electronic screens ?</li> </ul>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpfulness</li> <li>• Sharing</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• The right to privacy</li> <li>• Protecting others</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Respecting differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jealousy</li> <li>• Humiliation</li> <li>• Defamation</li> <li>• Submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do disabled people need your help?</li> <li>• Are we all bullies?</li> <li>• Are boys and girls the same ?</li> <li>• Can I feel what you feel?</li> <li>• Do all different generations respect one another?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Dignity</li> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Non-violence</li> <li>• Honesty</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I have to accept that other people are different?</li> </ul>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Self-control</li> <li>• Non-violence</li> <li>• Altruism</li> <li>• Solidarity</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Respecting differences</li> <li>• Equality</li> <li>• Openmindedness</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agression</li> <li>• Intolerance</li> <li>• Being biased</li> <li>• Dishonesty</li> <li>• Injustice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When should we say “no” (even to grown- ups)?</li> <li>• How much should children work?</li> <li>• What happens when someone dies?</li> <li>• Can we live without the Internet?</li> <li>• Is helping people always a good thing?</li> <li>• Do I have to follow tradition? (mine/others)</li> </ul>
P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• Respect for life</li> <li>• Respect for the environment</li> <li>• Modesty</li> <li>• Free-will</li> <li>• Openmindedness</li> <li>• Democracy</li> <li>• Emotions and feelings of love</li> <li>• Puberty and the development of the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fanaticism</li> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Sexism</li> <li>• Exclusion</li> <li>• Totalitarianism</li> <li>• Being wasteful</li> <li>• Being destructive</li> <li>• Intolerance</li> <li>• Addictions : e.g. smoking, alcohol, drugs, etc.</li> <li>• Sexual harrassment (<i>if necessary, according teaching team</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is fanaticism dangerous?</li> <li>• Do we need to conserve Earth’s resources?</li> <li>• Are men and women equal?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of spreading intimate photographs on social networks?</li> <li>• What responsibilities do we have if we want to live in a democracy?</li> <li>• Do we have the right to reject others?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of a dependence on something?</li> <li>• How does sexual harrassment start?</li> </ul>

## 5. Assessment

Regarding assessment:

- Self-evaluation is of paramount importance in the teaching of ethics.
- The emphasis is on the process and progress, not on assessing the pupils. Strictly speaking the teachers are not looking for “results.”
- Pupils will acquire the skills to enable them to self-assess continually.

- The pupil’s portfolio is the perfect place to demonstrate progress in their ethics learning.
- The teacher should give regular feedback on the progress made as well as helping the pupil to identify the next steps for learning.
- Regular exchanges between the ethics teacher and the pupil are vital to produce quality work.
- It is important that pupils have knowledge of the skills that will be, in effect, "assessed". As such, it is important to realise that often in ethics not everything can be assessed. However, even if it is difficult or impossible to evaluate, the development of values must remain a priority over the acquisition of factual knowledge.
- In general terms, we should avoid making the evaluation the focus of the learning. In this way, we would risk that the pupils do not develop the most fundamental values.

### Competency level descriptors

The evaluation in the school report is indicative and reflects the overall level reached, indicated by the number of crosses appearing on each line.

	<b>Towards independent thinking</b>		<b>Towards shared human values</b>
P1	The pupil does not understand that he must learn to control himself/herself.	X	The pupil behaves in an egocentric way.
	While understanding the need to, the pupil is unable to control his/her behavior.	XX	While understanding the need to, the pupil conducts himself/herself egocentrically.
	The pupil understands that s/he must control himself/herself and makes an effort to do this.	XXX	The pupil understands the interests of the school community and tries to help it develop positively.
	The pupil understands that he must control himself/herself and is able to do so.	XXXX	The pupil develops well in the school community and finds it a source of personal development.
P2	The pupil does not understand the principles of debate and does not participate in discussions.	X	The pupil does not understand the need to be open to others and take an interest in them.
	While understanding the principles of debate, the pupil fails to follow them, either not listening to the speakers or not taking the floor to express his/her own opinions.	XX	While understanding the need, the pupil fails to be open to others and take an interest in what they say, beyond how they would naturally.
	The pupil understands the principles of debate and makes an efforts to respect them.	XXX	The pupil understands the need to be open to others and tries to do so beyond the way that he/she would normally do.
	The pupil understands the principles of a discussion led by an adult and can actively participate in it.	XXXX	The pupil understands the importance of opening up to others with sincerity.
P3	The pupil does not understand the need to justify his/her point of view and do not	X	The pupil does not understand the difference between attitudes determined

	argue with examples or experiences.		by positive or negative values.
	While understanding the need to justify his/her point of view, the pupil is not able to do so.	XX	The pupil understands the difference between attitudes determined by positive or negative values.
	Understanding the need to justify his/her point of view, the pupil makes an effort to argue his/her case.	XXX	The pupil is becoming aware that the consequences of his/her attitude towards others is determined by positive or negative values.
	The pupil understands the need to justify his/her point of view and does so with examples and experiences	XXXX	The pupil is becoming aware that the consequences of his/her attitude towards others is determined by positive or negative values and develops positive values.
P4	The pupil does not understand that for the same idea different points of view can coexist and never questions his/her original judgment.	X	The pupil does not understand the basic principles of a democratic society and does not respect principles of equality, respect for diversity, non-violence, solidarity, etc...
	While understanding different points of view can coexist, the pupil fails to take this into account to challenge his/her initial judgment.	XX	While understanding the principles of a democratic society, the pupil doesn't act according to its principles of equality, respecting difference, non-violence, solidarity etc...
	The pupil understands that different points of view can coexist and bears this in mind in questioning his/her initial judgements.	XXX	While understanding the principles of a democratic society, the pupil doesn't always act according to its principles of equality, respecting difference, non-violence, solidarity etc...
	The pupil understands that different points of view can coexist and bears this in mind when questioning the possibility of changing his/her own point of view.	XXXX	The pupil acts in a responsible way, by understanding the main principles of a democratic society: equality, respecting difference, non-violence and solidarity.
P5	The pupil doesn't understand how to form his/her own opinion.	X	The pupil doesn't know what is expected of him/her in terms of analysing a situation.
	While understanding that s/he may form his/her own opinion, the pupil is not able to.	XX	While understanding that s/he may analyse a situation, the pupil is not able to.
	The pupil understands that s/he can form their own opinion and makes a big effort to do so.	XXX	The pupil understands the need to look beyond his/her own life experiences and his/her own emotions in order to develop an analysis of a situation.
	The pupil has learned to form his/her own opinion.	XXXX	The pupil is sufficiently capable of freeing him/herself from their own life experiences and emotions in order to develop a broad and informed analysis of a situation.

## **APPENDIX**

Examples of situations which demonstrate these values and the obstacles in overcoming them will be added in the course of the academic year 2016-2017.

<https://portal.eursc.org/sites/LG/Subjects/Primary/NonConfessionalEthics/default.aspx>