

Year 3 Age 6-7

General Theme: Beyond the Classroom: The Wider Environment

Module 1 (1st Term) Myself at School

Introduction

The first module in this theme for Yr 3 takes the children beyond the classroom to understand the broader reality of the school they attend as a moral community also albeit on a larger scale and including others than my teacher and class-mates who they meet with every day, day in day out, in the different sorts of relationships outlined in Year 2 Module 1, i.e. as friends, casual acquaintances, and strangers – a concept which becomes more meaningful in this context and which now needs a focused discussion. It brings them to terms with their identity as members of their school, and with the question of how that identity is constituted – what renders them members of the school, and what they share with other members, including those who are not familiar to them, who they do not know, who are strangers. At this stage also the teacher needs to begin systematically working on a culture of ordered discussion in the classroom after allowing freedom in the earlier modules of the course. This includes: (a) learning the skills of successful communication, those of speaking and listening to others who speak well; (b) learning the virtues and values of attention, tolerance, courtesy, respect for the persons and opinions of others, and so on; (c) cultivating suitable self-confidence.

Objectives

- To continue to explore the twin themes of individual and common, of the self and other in the discovery of identity and difference;
- To extend the self-consciousness of the pupils as social beings in a context wider than the classroom which is the school;
- To explore the relations of the self within that context and to present the school as a broader moral community than the home and classroom, one that includes strangers;
- To begin to explore the idea, and the moral status, of being a stranger as against being a friend or acquaintance;
- To promote the idea of the school as a moral community marked by care for and about others, even those of its members who are strangers;
- To introduce the idea of property and of valuing property both that belonging to ourselves and others;
- To begin sophisticating the dynamics of an ordered discussion systematically by insisting on fundamentals like not speaking out of turn, giving due space for others to speak, and listening to others without interruption.

Teaching strategy

Tools: Narrative, exposition, discussion, exploration of ideas, comparison and contrast.

Resources: This module is conducted nearly entirely by discussion with some anecdotes and stories.

Method

- (a) Children are asked if they know any children in their school who are not members of their class and where they meet them. A discussion follows about how they know these other school-mates and how they regard their relationships with them; the teacher helps by returning the children to the distinction between friends and acquaintances explored in Year 2 and by briefly discussing the distinction with them anew. They are asked whether there are not other children in the school who they do not know, who they may know only by sight, who are **strangers** to them and why they think this is the case when it is not so in the classroom. They are then asked whether they do not think it a good thing to know as many of their school mates as possible and how this can happen.
- (b) This leads to the further discussion whether it is a good thing to have a large school or whether a small one is preferable – the advantages and disadvantages for oneself in belonging to either and for relationships in the school in general. Then, whether there are school friends who they also meet outside the school, where, and for what purpose. And then whether it is a good idea for children to remain together in the same class year in year out or whether they are better moved around to ensure that one gets to know as many of the children in one's school as possible and in order to make more friends.
- (c) This leads to the next question whether they regard their other school friends like their class friends or differently? If the latter, in what way/s? What do they share with their school friends that they do not share with their class friends and vice versa? Then to the question what it is that the children in the school share together apart from the physical space, and what it is that the members of a school **should** share together as a school community. Does the school organise occasions when children from different classes meet together, and what are the purposes of these meetings? Then whether they would like there to be more occasions when they get together with the children of other classes, if so what sorts of occasions and for what purposes.
- (d) The next point of discussion is the school **uniform**. The children are asked why they think all in the school wear the same uniform, and what wearing the school uniform means to them – the teacher should use the discussion to sensitize the children to the meaning of their belonging to a larger and more anonymous group than the class and to their self-identification with it, and to the idea that the school, on its part, regards them as its own members. The teacher explores what the latter means; how the school

regards them as its members, what they receive from the school as its members, and what the school expects from them in return.

- (e) The question what being members of the school means is taken further to bring out the idea of the school as a community. The discussion is opened with the question whether what makes one a member of the school is just the fact of wearing its uniform – would they still regard themselves as members of the school even if there was no uniform? Is the uniform that identifies them as members of the school or are there other things also? What are these other things? The teacher sensitizes the children to the fact that the school is the buildings and premises but, more importantly it is people living together, **sharing a way of life**, and discusses with them what this means. Next follows a general discussion of uniforms, who wears them and the purposes they serve. Then on the pros and cons of wearing a school uniform.
- (f) The children are next returned to the earlier discussion of the difference between being friends and casual acquaintances and asked whether there are children in the school who are neither, who are **strangers**. The teacher returns the class to the notion of stranger for a fuller discussion of the concept, of what makes another person a stranger. The discussion of this question should be an open one to begin with, with no teacher intervention except to regulate the discussion and to itemize the points that emerge from it – then s/he intervenes to take it deeper and complete the description. Next the children are asked what they think of strangers and how deal with them – what their relation is with children and others in the school who are strangers to them. They evidently treat them differently from their friends and acquaintances – how? Do they ignore them when they meet with them, greet them, do they try to make friends with them, how?
- (g) At this point the teacher summarizes the discussion; s/he make the important point that strangers, like friend and acquaintances, are **persons**. Even if we do not **know** them, or **greet** them, or **speak** to them (three different ways of relating with others), they are not objects like pieces of furniture. As persons like oneself they are individuals with identities, with families, homes, friends, needs, feelings, interests, and so on – as such they should not be treated as objects any more than we treat our friends and acquaintances. We should **care** for and about them also – this is an important message that the teacher needs to put across carefully and convincingly at this stage. The next question – what should we do about new children, strangers, who join our class, how should we treat them? Maybe there are new children who can offer their experiences for discussion. Otherwise a story is told by the teacher for the purpose, or maybe two, one about a positive the other a negative experience.
- (h) The point the teacher makes next is that the fact that something is an object does not mean that we should not care for it – in fact we care very much for the objects we own because they are of value to us, they are our **property**. The question is, should we value our own property only or should we value that of other people too? Should we value each other's property in the classroom, for instance or just our own? Do we

expect others, our friends, to value our own property, so how could we consistently not value theirs? What does valuing another person's possessions or property mean (respecting, or not damaging, and caring for)? Are there any objects in the classroom that do not belong to me or my friends, or the teacher – who does it belong to (the school)? Should we value that also? Isn't the school, we all, myself included, after all?

Module 2 (2nd term) Myself in my Neighbourhood

Introduction

The focus for the second term, with Module 2, is myself in my neighbourhood as a living space which is physical and social; a geographical space marked by a certain sense of shared ownership and a social space of relationships with others who are. The module explores both senses of the word, it thereby extends the exploration of the ethics of sharing a living space which began with the family home then the classroom and the school in which one belongs. It extends this sense of being and sharing together to the broader social reality within which the children live their everyday lives. Again they are returned to the different relationships implied by considering others as friends, acquaintances, and strangers, already explored in previous modules and now explored in this wider social context of the neighbourhood one lives in. The question how our neighbourhood is **ours**, the meaning of 'ours' is answered within the broader question of ownership and property which, also, is returned to in this new context, and with it that of sharing – all three concepts are explored in some depth. Following which the issue of care is returned to and is taken up at the two levels; care for property, for one's things or belongings, and care for others – the opportunity here is the more general one to explore more deeply the difference between caring for objects and caring for animate things, persons and animals. The question of being a stranger is also returned to this time to explore it in the context of the neighbourhood.

Objectives

- To explore the idea of neighbourhood as a geographical and social space;
- To explore the implications of living in such a space, in a neighbourhood, what it means in terms of relationships and obligations;
- To introduce the distinction between something being private and public;
- To render the children self-conscious of the fact that they live not just in their homes but in their neighbourhood where their home is located;
- To continue to develop their understanding of the different notions of friends, acquaintances, and strangers and to explore them as relationships within neighbourhoods;

- To explore the rights and obligations such relationships entail;
- To explore the different forms the claim to ownership, to something being ‘mine’ and/or ‘ours’ can take;
- To reinforce the distinction explored in previous modules between how we treat objects and animate beings – what one’s obligations towards either should be;
- To further discuss the notion of being a stranger and to explore its meaning in a neighbourhood context;

Teaching strategy

Tools: Narrative, exposition, discussion, exploration of ideas, comparison and contrast.

Resources: This module is conducted nearly entirely by discussion with some anecdote and stories and used to consolidate the last objective of the previous module.

Method

- (a) The teacher links this module with the previous one by returning to the distinction friends/acquaintances/strangers pursued there. S/he points out that while my house is used exclusively by my family and is, therefore, **private** it lies in a street and neighbourhood that are **public** i.e. used by everybody, resident or visiting – the distinction between the two terms is thoroughly discussed with examples. My special interest in my street and neighbourhood is that my house is there, I **live** in it with my family not just **visit** it. This **sharing** of a neighbourhood in common is what makes people **neighbours**. Neighbours are people who **permanently** share a neighbourhood, a complex of streets and spaces, which they also, however, share **occasionally** with outsiders who come into it to work or for other purposes, or because they are visiting or passing through. They can be friends and acquaintances, but they can also be strangers if the neighbourhood is large or scattered or if they have moved in recently. (NB In the Maltese context, the idea of a neighbourhood can be presented as a **parish (parrocchia)**, which is similarly understood as a **geographical** and a **residential** space, to render it more intelligible to the children, although parish also has religious connotations.)
- (b) S/he asks the children to say something about the street they live in and their neighbourhood first as a physical then as a social space. In the latter case they are asked who they know in their street/neighbourhood, whether there are other residents who are their own or their family’s friends, and how neighbours show their friendship towards one another. Then whether there are casual acquaintances, people they know and greet or exchange a word with now and then, but no more. Then they are asked how these relationships are important to them – what they think binds, or should bind, people who share a neighbourhood together, whether they think of the neighbourhood also as a community. Finally whether there are also people who live in their street

and/or in their neighbourhood who are familiar to them but who are not their friends or acquaintances, who are strangers they do not acknowledge or greet, and why this is so.

- (c) With this last question they are returned to the question (taken up in the previous module to some depth) who and what strangers are, whether strangers should mean anything to us, if so what? Then whether the fact that they live in our street and neighbourhood should mean anything to us – whether there is anything special about them that makes them different from other strangers. The teacher directs the children to the answer, namely that, notwithstanding that they are strangers we **share something in common** with them; the same living space, the same streets and neighbourhood. This sharing gives us something in common with them, that binds us with them even though we do not know them, a common interest, it also creates common **obligations** with them; **to take care** of together what we hold in common, the streets and other spaces of our neighbourhood. The teacher points out that though they are not really ours or anyone's specifically, our street and neighbourhood are ours in the sense that they are the ones who live there, hence we identify with them and they are **special** for us, like our homes, as they are not for others who live outside. We feel a common interest in them because, belonging to us in this sense, we have a special **claim** on them – and a special **responsibility** for them.
- (d) The children need to be taken carefully through (c) by the teacher. The question put to them now is what kind of responsibility it is that we have to care for our streets and neighbourhoods. What that care means, what we are responsible for. They are invited to draw on their experience of living in their own street and neighbourhood for this discussion – should we regard our streets as an extension of our home and care for them in the same way? What would this mean – how do we care for our home? Should we care for our neighbourhood the same way as our home? What would that mean? Is our responsibility towards caring for our home and for our neighbourhood the same? The discussion is free and the teacher simply fields the children's views on the matter. S/he then reminds them that though we speak about our neighbourhood as **ours**, the common property of those who live there, they are not ours in the way our house is ours. We need a closer look at the notion of **property** to see the difference.
- (e) The children are asked to itemize things they regard as their property, that belong to them. The teacher asks the children to look closer examples and others she suggests to make the point that among these items there are those which they can dispose with (by selling, giving, throwing away, and so on) and others which they can't – that there are different ways things can belong to us. Things are fully our property when we can **dispose with** them as we please (because we have bought, made, earned, inherited, them, or they have been given to us **unconditionally**. With others, where we have only limited power to dispose with them our ownership of them is **conditional**, we do not have complete control on them and their use – with children this is the case with their toys and most of their other possessions, for instance, that are **given** to them by their parents and others and can be taken away from them.

- (f) In this second sense things are ours but they are not, strictly speaking, our property – they are ours to **use** them well and we have no right to mistreat or **abuse** them – and this is true of our neighbourhood. A discussion of these two terms, use and abuse, is entered into with the children and the difference made clear with examples provided by the teacher and invited from the children themselves, and with anecdotes. The point to be made is that we have an obligation to use things **well**, especially when they are given to us and are not our property, and this is true of our neighbourhood; of the streets and the other **public** spaces. This means **respecting** and **caring** for them, and using them for their proper purposes. We use things **badly** when we mistreat them, when we spoil or destroy them or use them carelessly. When we do this we betray the trust of those who confided them to our use – in the case of our neighbourhood, the community. Children are invited and led to give examples of how we mistreat or take insufficient care of the neighbourhoods (by dirtying, littering and vandalising them in different ways) when it is our **duty** to care for them as if they were our own.
- (g) The teacher turns the discussion away from the neighbourhood as a physical environment to the neighbourhood as a social environment – to discuss people rather than things. S/he returns them to the distinction between things, objects like streets and houses that are **inanimate** and **animate**, sentient, beings capable of experiencing feeling, of experiencing pain and comfort, not just human but animal also. S/he recalls the point of earlier discussions that while objects or inanimate things are property, and can be disposed with as such, animate beings, human and animal cannot. That the difference was made by referring to the latter as having **rights**, the first of which is not to be treated as an object. This key distinction is re-introduced by the teacher through discussion and examples. An example to focus on is **my toys** that have no rights, differently from **my** brother/sister or friend, or from my pet, that do. Though I **call** them mine I do not own of my brother/sister, friend, etc, and my ownership of my pet means something different from my ownership of my toys – I cannot dispose of it as I can my toys.
- (h) The teacher reminds the children of the point made earlier on in the module about the street and neighbourhood being **places** one shares with friends, acquaintances, and strangers. But are our obligations towards those of our neighbours who are strangers, s/he asks, limited to caring for the physical environment, the streets and other public spaces, we share with them? Is there anything else we should share, obligations to care for them also, as well as of the physical environment, and what could these be? Should a neighbourhood be like a club where one shares the premises and amenities with fellow members, or should it be like a community where one shares with them also an interest in our mutual **well-being** – in this case what kind of interest? The teacher explains the difference. Next the children are asked if they have recently moved into the neighbourhood they live in, or if any new people have moved into their neighbourhood. Then what kinds of people they want for their neighbours, and what are the kinds they do not want? Finally, what they think respecting one's

neighbours means – an open discussion which the teacher should lead with probing questions.

Module 3 (3rd Term): The Broader Social and Natural Environment

Introduction

This module completes Primary Programme A. A programme which helps children situate themselves more self-consciously in their world; one in which they are unique individuals but which they share with other unique beings, human and non-human. It completes a process, a voyage of self-discovery, which began in the immediate, intimate, environs of the home and family, continued with the classroom and the school, in which they also spend a substantial part of their time, then with the street and neighbourhood, and ends here with the broader social environment which is the town/village and beyond, and the natural environment – an idea which brings the children into contact with a world that exists even beyond the country we live in and which we share with other human and non-human beings. The twin, reciprocal, ideas of sharing and caring – the principle that sharing involves caring – which runs through the programme is brought into operation here also, as is the other reciprocal principle of consistency; that what we expect from others in the way they behave towards us should be the way we behave towards them. The module returns to the sense of what is ‘mine’ or ‘ours’, what we claim as our own, and extends the discussion of property in the previous module further, or rather it extends that discussion into the broader realm of the social and physical world (which is the natural world) beyond the neighbourhood. It begins by exploring the idea of belonging to a society that is broader than the neighbourhood and what this can mean for strangers who are not born into it and have to learn to adapt to it. It then addresses the issue of taking domestic animals, dogs, into public places, and of caring for our domestic animals and pets in general which is also a continuation of the theme begun in [find]. From there it moves into the broader question of how we should behave in public spaces when we are on picnics or outings, and finally to discuss our more general duty to care for our natural environment, its fauna and flora. which is a part of a much larger reality which is the world.

Objectives

- Introducing children to the principle of reciprocity, of mine and yours, as a principle of fairness;
- Further exploring the meaning of belonging to a place and extending it from home, neighbourhood, class, school, to the broader reality of living in a wider society;
- Introducing the children to the idea (the responsibility) of joint custodianship of the physical environment, the place we live in, of streets and other public spaces, the need to protect and care together for what we use together;
- Extending the idea of joint custodianship, the obligation to care for, to the sea and the natural world that also ours in common;

- Exploring further the idea of caring for animals, not just domestic and in the home but in public places and in the wild also;
- Introducing the first discussion of a controversial subject under conditions of a civil discussion with the subject: Should wild animals be hunted?;
- Teaching and insisting on the rules for such a discussion to take place;
- Sensitizing children to the reality of difference in their class, school, neighbourhood through exposure to the narratives of foreigners who share the classroom and school with them as communities;
- Introducing the children to the idea of a natural environment including the air we breathe and the atmosphere in general;
- Introducing them to the idea of a shared world together our local natural environment being part of a world-wide ecological system which we are also obliged to care for.

Teaching strategy

Tools: Narrative, exposition, discussion, exploration of ideas, comparison and contrast.

Resources: This module is conducted nearly entirely by discussion with some anecdote and stories.

Method

- (a) The teacher returns the class (through discussion) to the subject of the previous module the streets and neighbourhood we live in – and reminds the children of the sense in which I can call them **mine** (namely that I live in them and share them with neighbours) and in which, therefore, they are special to me. S/he reminds them that being ‘mine’, while it brings with it a sense of ownership in some sense, should also bring with it a special sense of responsibility, of care, that means taking a special interest in them physically, as roads and other public spaces (being interested in their appearance and upkeep, their cleanliness and their general improvement), and in the people living in them socially. S/he also reminds them that we share our neighbourhood with others who also **use** it in various ways (people passing through, working there, and so on) and who are strangers from outside, **outsiders**. We expect them to respect our neighbourhood by behaving well when they are in it; by not littering it, vandalising, polluting it with noise and fumes, and so on. The **principle of reciprocity** is introduced to the children as a principle of fairness and discussed with them at this stage; expecting outsiders to treat our neighbourhood with respect implies our willingness to treat theirs with respect in turn
- (b) S/he then points out to them that we belong to an even bigger social and geographical environment than our street or even neighbourhood – she asks them what that is and first leads them to the answer; their town or village, then the country, and the world.

S/he asks the children to tell him/her what they know about their town/village and whether they have friends and acquaintances from outside their school and neighbourhood who they share it with. A general discussion on what **belonging** to their town or village means to them, whether it means a special sense of belonging, and whether they do not also feel that they belong to the wider society even than their town/village, which is Maltese society. How do they feel, if at all, that they belong to, are part of, Maltese society? What is the sense of belonging they experience here if at all? This is the subject of a discussion, which includes the question whether they feel they have obligations to this wider society, and if so what they are. The children are invited to speak and illustrate their statements with narratives and anecdotes from their experience – the teacher should leave the discussion free and only play the role of chairperson in this case, possibly summarising at the end.

- (c) There will probably be non-Maltese pupils who do not feel at home, who feel strangers in their neighbourhood and, even more so, in the town/village they live in, who feel that they do not belong in their neighbourhood never mind in the wider society which they may know little or nothing about. They are invited to express their feelings and tell their stories of living here openly and honestly, positive and negative, to share them with the other children together with their hopes, their fears, their expectations for themselves and their families. They are encouraged to speak about themselves and their families, about their native homes, the countries they have come from, the localities and communities they belonged to before they came here, their beliefs, customs, and so on. The other children are encouraged to participate in their narratives and to ask them questions. In conclusion they are all each invited to post a small account of themselves (in writing, through pictures, photos, drawings, and so on) and to visit and share each other's pages.
- (d) The teacher turns the focus away from this first foray into the social space/environment in this and the previous module, to address another broad, different, space/environment, the natural. The idea is to extend the discussion of our duty to care for other beings, and of common ownership and custodianship of the physical/social environment to animals and the domestic and natural environment. Another issue, however, needs to be tackled first; the teacher turns the children's attention to the presence of stray animals on the streets and asks them to discuss this issue; whether strays or unclaimed animals, usually cats and dogs, should be allowed and what should be done with them especially when they are injured or distressed. This should lead to the other question, with respect to dogs, whether they should be taken out by their owners, and where? Whether they should be taken to public places; parks, beaches, and so on, and what are the responsibilities of owners who take their dog out. The children are encouraged to share personal stories and anecdotes throughout these discussions.
- (e) The children are sensitized to the existence of animals' hospitals and clinics, laws and NGOs for animal protection, vets and so on. This should lead to a return to the topic of our treatment of pets taken up in Module 3 of Yr 1, and to full and a general discussion of

how we ought to treat pets and domestic animals in our homes – with stories, anecdotes and examples. From there the discussion should move into the countryside and the situation of the wild animals that live in it. The children are asked to name the wild animals they know, this is a free exercise; the teacher then distinguishes between those that are indigenous and those that are foreign, that are found in other places than Malta, and between those that live on and under the ground, that live in the air, and live in the sea, and points to the wide variety of species – the richness of nature through the use of documentaries, and so on. The children are then asked to discuss whether animals should be hunted, and if so which. **This is the first controversial discussion introduced in the Ethics programme** – the teacher will take the occasion to show how an ordered discussion proceeds, what its value is, and what can, and cannot be expected to come out of it.

- (f) Closing here, at this stage, on this theme about the ethical treatment of animals the teacher turns the discussion to the other general question of physical space; whether people should be allowed to have picnics or go for family or other outings by the sea or in the countryside? Then, more specifically if it's OK to have barbeques in the open, and where? From there: Is it OK to leave litter behind when we finish our picnic or barbeque? Why not? Is it OK to litter the sea? Who does the sea/countryside belong to? Children are reminded of the same question asked earlier about their street, neighbourhood, town/village, and the answer that was given to it. The conclusion the teacher wants to arrive at is that the sea/countryside belong to everybody in the sense that everybody has the **right of access** to it, and to nobody in the sense that nobody actually **owns** it – the difference is discussed with the children to whom it is pointed out that it is **public** spaces we are referring to, not private; **private** spaces are restricted, like homes and other property, and the privacy needs to be **respected**. The point that needs to come out of the discussion with regard to the sea and countryside, like all public spaces, is that belong to us all to use but not to abuse since we share their use with others – so caring for them is a common responsibility we all have and owe to each other.
- (g) The children are next asked how we can care for our natural Maltese environment (our sea/countryside). The term **natural environment** is used and introduced to the children for the first time at this stage and its definition taken beyond the sea and countryside to include the air we breathe, the atmosphere will live in. The children are asked whether they think our natural environment, physical and biological, needs protecting and why. A discussion of how they are presently endangered follows. The teacher sets it off by taking the children back to the earlier example of littering and, then invited the children to mention other ways the natural environment is being littered. S/he then asks what are the things found in the natural environment that need protecting leading them with suggestions. And asks whether we should have the same obligation to care for and protect our natural environment as we have for our home, school, and neighbourhood – suggesting that the natural environment is our common home also. Then how they think that everyone individually and together can make a difference.

(h) In conclusion, the teacher makes the difficult point that our natural environment is not only a part of a bigger world just as our home is part of a bigger world which is our neighbourhood, our class a bigger world which is our school, our neighbourhood a bigger reality which is our town/village, and so on. That natural world is the Mediterranean sea and beyond – a piece of geography is required here, with illustrations. The point to make is that our natural environment is a part of that world which we share with other peoples in other countries, which, in other words, belongs to **humanity in the sense that human beings use it and are called upon to care for it**. And that, therefore, what we do with our natural environment is a world-wide or human concern not just ur own, and the same is true with other natural environments; they are our concern also. The only way to make these points is by illustration and example which will take the teacher into the simple descriptions of the global ecological situation, and require some simple documentaries about endangered ecological systems and the animal species in them.