

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

This brochure is designed to give you the parent an overview of the school and the various activities that take place here. It also contains some of the important policies which have been developed over the years by staff, parent and Board of Management. These policies are to ensure the smooth running of the school. They are always open to change and suggestions are most welcome.

If this is your first child to go to primary school then it may be quite a while since you have had any contact with school. Some things may have changed a lot and perhaps some may not have changed at all. Either way, we hope that this brochure may answer some of your questions, give you some practical advice on how to help your child as he/she begins school, and give you some information on the primary education system.

Scoil Éanna opened its doors for the first day on 1st September 2003 as an amalgamation of Scoil Bhríde Girls' School and St. Patrick's Boys' School. Both schools had shared the one campus since 1975 as two separate schools. The amalgamation has marked the beginning of a positive new beginning for our school. Since then our school has moved from strength to strength. We have had major financial works over the past few years that have seen our electrical, plumbing and heating system upgraded to a very high specification. We are currently having our flat roof replaced with a pitched roof, which will be completed to the specification as seen in our brochure. We are currently fundraising to upgrade our playground facilities.

At present we have nine mainstream classrooms, four resource rooms, a fully-equipped computer suite, a meeting room, two offices, a first-aid room and a staffroom. Our main hall provides a venue for school celebrations, assembly and also P.E lessons. All of our main-stream classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards. A full list of staff, and their role in the school, is posted on the school website.

Board of Management

Fr. La Flynn	Chairperson
Mr. Michael Lavelle	Community Representative
Mrs Margaret McCluskey	Principal /Secretary
Mr Kevin Curran	Parents' Representative
Mrs Sharon Caraher	Parents' Representative
Mrs. Liz Duffy	Teachers' Representative
Mrs. Margaret Duffy	Patrons' Nominee
Mr Francis Linden	Community Representative

Scoil Éanna Parents' Association

Scoil Éanna has a very active Parents' Association that meets monthly in the school. The members of the committee are elected annually at their AGM.

What is a Parent Association?

The parent association is the structure through which the parents/guardians in a school can get involved in the school and work together for the best possible education for their children.

Membership of a Parent Association

All parents/guardians of children in the school are members of the association with a number of parents being elected to the committee. A general meeting of the association is held each year during the first term. At this meeting a minimum of eight and a maximum of 20 parents are asked to volunteer to represent the parents during the school year. A committee consisting of a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and public relations officer are then elected. The parent association of Scoil Éanna meet approximately once a month during the school year.

Why should parents get involved in the Parent Association?

- Educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve better outcomes when parents and teachers work together.
- The school is regarded as an extension of the home and an active partnership between parents and teachers make this a reality, especially in the eyes of the child, who is the central figure.

What does a Parent Association do?

The parent association works with the principal, staff and board of management to build effective partnership between home and school.

- The parent association is a support for parents in the school and will represent parent views on particular issues or problems arising during the year.
- The parents association should work in partnership with the Principal and teachers in the development and review of school policies and procedures.
- The parent association can invite speakers to address the parents on issues which are topical or relevant.
- Parents associations can suggest and/or organise extra-curricular activities with the agreement of the Board of Management.
- Parent associations can drive fundraising activities for the school
- Parent associations provide help and assistance in school run activities when required e.g. Intercultural Day, Grandparents Day, and Enrolment Evening. School Mass, Book Fair etc.

What does a Parent Association not do?

The parent association is not a forum to complain against an individual teacher or parent. The Complaints Procedure is the mechanism for this. **Home / School Links**

We recognise the important role of parents in the education of their children and we try to maintain the closest possible links between home and school. Ongoing communication takes place between the school and the home by regular newsletter keeping parents informed of all the happenings at school. A text-a-parent system is in operation in the school. The school website scoileanna.ie is also a valuable form of communication. The school may also be contacted via email on www.scoileannaballybay@eircom.net

Parents are welcome to call to the school on an informal basis but if you would like to meet a teacher on a substantial issue e.g. a progress report on your child, then it is best to make an appointment. This is for the benefit of both parent and teacher, as it will lead to a more useful outcome if both parties have time to prepare and also arrangements can be made for supervision of the teacher's class.

Homework is another way in which parents can keep in touch with what their child is doing at school (please read enclosed homework policy)

The School Day

The school day begins at 9.15am. Supervision is provided from 9.05am each morning. We are not responsible for children who arrive to school before this time. We would ask you not to have your child on the school premises before 9.05am.

There is a fifteen minute break from 10.45am to 11.00am

Lunchtime is from 12.30pm to 1.00pm.

Infant classes finish at 2.00pm. Parents of infant classes must collect their children from their classroom at 2.00pm. Parents must inform the school if there is a change in arrangements for collection of their child/if another adult is going to collect their child on a particular day.

School ends for all other classes at 3.00pm. Children are supervised as they exit the school. For safety reasons, pupils who are travelling home by car must be collected from the designated pick-up point at the school car-park.

Children who remain at school after 3.00pm awaiting the arrival of school transport are supervised until their bus arrives.

At the moment we have three play areas that are fully supervised by staff during breaks.

School Absences

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Principal of a school is obliged to notify absences in excess of 20 days in any school year, to the National Education Welfare Board. It is up to the local Education Welfare Officer to follow up on these reports. If your child cannot attend school on a particular day the parent should notify the school. On the child's return to school the parent must provide a letter of explanation for absence, for our school records (for further information see our Punctuality and Attendance policy enclosed in this brochure.

Leaving School Early

If you need to withdraw your child from school during the course of the day we would ask you to inform the class teacher/secretary in advance. Your child must be signed out and collected from the school office.

Uniform

The school has a uniform consisting of blue crested sweatshirt, white polo shirt/shirt, and grey trousers/skirt/pinafore. Tracksuit bottoms may also be worn but they must be navy or black, and without any logos or stripes. Runners must be worn on P.E. days. Girls' shoes should not have high heels. For health and safety reasons pupils are only permitted to wear stud earrings in school. Parents are encouraged not to allow their children wear fashion jewellery or nail varnish to school. The wearing of 'heelies' is strictly forbidden.

School Finances

At present the Department of Education and Skills gives a grant per pupil to the school. We also get a grant to cover the cost of hiring a secretary and a

caretaker. In practice this money barely covers the essential cost of insurance, cleaning, lighting and a minimum level of equipment. Each year extra money is raised through fundraising. Each year, together with the Parents' Association we run various events to raise extra funds for the school.

During the course of the year the children will be offered educational trips and educational activities in various subject areas e.g. swimming, tag rugby, music, dancing, drama. Some of these activities will be covered by grants or sponsored by various bodies, at other times you the parent will be expected to pay for them. We are all affected by the current economic recession and we try to keep the costs as low as possible. If any parent has a difficulty with paying for extra activities they should contact the Principal who will try to arrange for help in those circumstances.

The school operates a book rental scheme which reduces the financial burden for parents. Irish, English, Maths and Religion books are all available through this scheme. As we do not envisage ourselves as being 'slaves to textbooks' we tend to avoid, where possible, the purchase of texts, especially in the senior classes, for other subjects areas as they tend to be very expensive and quickly become outdated. We make great use of up-to-date information that is readily to us on the internet through our interactive whiteboards. Unfortunately, there are some workbooks that are deemed necessary, especially for junior classes. In spite of this we endeavour to keep our book bills to a minimum.

Insurance at school

All schools have a public liability insurance policy. This covers each child against accidents, which happen as a result of negligence on the part of the school authorities between the opening and closing times of school.

Even in the best-run homes or schools accidents will happen. If your child has an accident in school, he/she will be looked after as any prudent parent would look after their own child. For minor accidents, e.g. small cuts and bruises, minor first-aid will be administered. No medicine of any kind will be given to a child at school unless it has been arranged in advance and agreed by the Board of Management. For more serious accidents the parent or guardian will be contacted and a decision whether or not to bring the child home or to the doctor will be made.

In the event of the school not being able to contact the parents or any other responsible minder, the child may be brought to the doctor from the school. In very serious cases an ambulance will be called. All parents are asked to give

their permission for these procedures on the Registration Form when enrolling their child in the school.

Private Insurance

As stated above, your child is insured in school only against accidents where the school authorities are deemed to have been negligent in some way; however, most accidents happen through no fault of anyone. To cover such eventualities all children are covered by a personal accident policy. The premium for this is added to the booklist each year. In this way your child is insured against all accidents that may happen throughout the entire day.

Health and Hygiene

Your child is now sharing a room daily with a large number of four/five year olds. Close contact with other children is unavoidable, so particular attention should be paid to health and hygiene.

We no longer provide towels in the toilets since the swine flu outbreak. In place of this we have paper towel dispensers in each toilet and also at each classroom sink. Liquid soap dispensers are also in place in every toilet area and at every sink.

You should check your child's hair regularly for head lice – if your child has contacted head lice you should inform the school and treat the hair immediately. The school will send out a notice to all the children in the class asking all parents to treat their child's hair.

If your child is sick, please do not send him/her to school. It will only lead to spread of infection to others.

The HSE offers medical screening for children at least once during their primary school years. This includes screening for vision, hearing, general

health and nutrition. Parents will always receive a permission slip to allow the screening to go ahead.

A good diet and plenty of sleep, fresh air and exercise are essential to the growing child. Allow plenty of time in the morning for you child to eat a healthy breakfast. Choose lunches carefully. The school has a healthy eating policy which is included in this brochure. Health education is part of the school curriculum. In school, children will be encouraged to make good choices in relation to food – your choice for them should not conflict with this.

Special Needs Education

There has been a major shift in policy in the Department of Education and Skills in recent years with regard to children with special educational needs. In Scoil Éanna we endeavour to identify, as early as possible, any children who may need additional learning support. A number of our staff has additional qualifications and expertise in this area. At present we have three full time and three part-time teachers who cater for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Children are allocated to these teachers on the basis of test results in the school, combined with assessments for educational psychologists and other health professionals. If a parent feels that their child is experiencing difficulties in any area at school they should discuss the matter with the class teacher in the first instance. Following such discussion an educational plan may be drawn up by the class teacher, in consultation with parents. The matter will then be taken up with the learning support team and the Principal. Any decision to allocate extra resources or commission further reports will be made in consultation with the parents.

Assessment in Scoil Éanna

Informal Assessment is the most commonly used form of assessment in the school. This is where the teacher builds up a picture of each pupil and their strengths and weaknesses through daily observation of how the child copes with the tasks set for him/her. It includes observations on the child's social behaviour and progress as well as their academic progress.

Formal Assessment is where the teacher uses various tests to check the progress of the pupils on particular areas of the curriculum. Three types of tests are used.

1. Class tests designed by the teacher. These tests are used frequently to monitor whether or not the child is progressing satisfactorily in all subjects of the curriculum.
2. Standardised Tests. These are tests that are written by experts outside of the school. They give a picture of how any child is progressing relative to all the children of that age in the country. We administer these tests every year in English and Maths to all pupils from First to Sixth class.
3. Diagnostic Tests. These tests are administered by the teachers in charge of special educational needs. They are used as a follow-up to the above tests, where a specific learning difficulty is suspected. These tests are used to inform teaching. They help in the diagnosis of children with specific learning difficulties e.g. dyspraxia, dyslexia and dyscalculia.

The Use of Test Results

In Scoil Éanna, test results are used in three main ways:

1. To record the child's progress through the year and from year to year.
2. To identify children in need of extra help.
3. Test results combined with teacher observation from the basis of our reports to parents concerning the child's progress at school.

Reporting of Results of Assessment to Parents

Each year we hold a parent/teacher meeting where parents come in to meet the teachers involved in their child's education for an oral report. Also, at the end of each year parents get a written report on their child. Each child has a report book which is kept in the school so that each teacher who teaches your child will be familiar with their progress record.

PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL

Starting school is a milestone in the life of a child. It is often a time of stress and anxiety for parents. Parents, however, can do much to reduce such anxiety – both for themselves and their child. This preparation should begin some months before the child starts and should be carried out gradually. It is an enormous change for a child to have to share a room with up to 30 other children and one adult. There is much however that parents can do however to prepare the child to cope with separation and socialisation, and to build a sense of control in the child.

The following may help:

An initial visit to the school is a good idea. Meet the Principal and the teacher of infants. Show your child the school building, the classroom, where the toilets are, the playground etc. You and your child will be invited to the school for an afternoon, which usually takes place in June. This will also give your child the opportunity to meet with the other pupils in his/her class.

Talk to your child about your own school days in a positive way. Emphasise the opportunities for making friends and getting involved in new activities. However, don't 'hype up' school life. Approach this talk with a calm attitude – treat it as a normal development in the child's life.

Introduce your child to another junior infant; if possible have them around to play during the summer holidays. It is important for your child to see some familiar face on the first day.

Children should be able to put on and take off coats and hang them up, to use the toilet and flush is properly, to tidy up their crayons and colouring books. Help them to use a handkerchief of tissue, to share toys and to take turns in the playground.

Label your entire child's clothes and belongings clearly – help them to identify their own belongings.

Your child should know his/her name and home address. If you have provided the school with the name of a person to be contacted if you are not available, explain this arrangement to your child

Allow your child to do things independently.

Encourage your child by having him/her dress himself/herself. Allow time for this in the morning.

Don't criticise if things are not exactly to your liking e.g. buttons not perfect!

Praise their efforts at every opportunity

Ask yourself whether or not your child can manage his/her clothes. Zips may be easier than buttons; elasticised trousers can be easier than zips or buttons.

Choose a lunch box and beaker that can be easily opened.

Give some thought to the actual lunch too. Peeled oranges, for example, will make your child less dependent on the teacher. Set yoghurt may avoid unnecessary spills.

All of the above can help your child feel capable of dealing with classroom routine. It also helps the teacher enormously. Valuable time can be saved if a teacher does not have to peel 30 oranges/button up 30 coats at lunchtime!

PREPARATION FOR LEARNING

Children learn informally from birth from their parents and from their environment. Parents are often anxious to begin to see some results of formal learning soon after the child begins school. Remember, children will start to read and write at different ages just as they learn to walk and talk at different times. A lot of the work in junior infants involves preparing children to read and write. It is far more important for parents to help their child to get ready to read than to try and teach them the names of the letters and how to write them. If a child is well prepared then they will experience success when they start to read and this is the key to reading and writing – early experiences of success.

Parents can help greatly in this reading readiness in the following ways.

Language is an essential pre-requisite to reading. Listen attentively to your children. Talk to them and encourage them. Give them time to explain and retell events to you. Avoid interrupting them even if you know what they are going to say. When talking to your child don't economise with words. Don't use baby talk.

Irish, as both language and subject, is most often new to most children beginning school. Incidental and informal use by parents of occasional expressions, such as greetings and the simpler common courtesies, will be of assistance to the children in easing their handling of a second language. Familiarity with the expressions such as Más é do thoil é (please) Go raibh maith agat (thank you) maith an cailín/buachaill (good girl/boy) Slán (bye) etc. will be invaluable to them in coping with the demands of school. In Scoil Éanna we endeavour to speak Irish as often as possible during the day and in doing so hope to foster a positive attitude to Irish. If you have bad memories of learning Irish in school, please do not pass these on to your child.

Read to your child regularly. This encourages a love of books and creates an interest in reading. Ensure that reading is an enjoyable experience. Don't prolong the reading when the child has lost interest – short enjoyable experiences are best. Join your local library, and make this trip a part of your regular weekly/fortnightly routine.

Pay attention to the mechanics of reading i.e. holding the book, turning the page – page by page. Let your fingers go under the words as you read from left to right. The child's main interest will be in the pictures – allow time to examine and comment on them. Encourage them to repeat the story to you or tell you their favourite bit.

Enjoy nursery rhymes together.

Help your child to identify colours.

Writing

Young children need to develop the right muscles in their hands before they can begin to write properly. You can help this development by encouraging them to do things which involve using their hands such as drawing, cutting paper, using play-dough etc. You should provide large sheets of paper and chubby crayons for scribbling, drawing, colouring in, tracing copying etc/scissors for cutting paper dolls and teddies with clothes that can be buttoned, laced, zipped and tied.

Basis Maths

You can help your child become familiar with the concepts they will need to understand when they are introduced to basic maths in school. Allow your child to help you sort cutlery, setting the table, counting out the correct number of spoons, forks etc. Allow your child to help you divide sweets among friends. Encourage your child to collect things from the park/beach/walks – like shells, cones, pebbles, nuts and feathers. They can have fun later sorting and classifying the different objects.

Try the same thing with collections of buttons, badges, lids etc. Use language with your child that will help them to understand the concepts of more, less, the same, bigger than, smaller than, longer, shorter, taller etc. will be of great benefit to them

The First Day

It is important that you establish a good routine early. Check that all items of uniform and bag are ready for the morning. Do this in a calm fashion – don't have your child over-excited or anxious going to bed. Give plenty of time in the morning for washing, dressing, and eating a good breakfast.

On the big day, if you are feeling upset, don't show it. Leave your child with the teacher and tell him/her that you will be back at the appropriate time to collect him/her.

If your child is upset trust the teacher. The teacher is very experienced and knows how to comfort an anxious child. The Principal and perhaps another support teacher will also be there to help. Don't stand around the door of the classroom waving to your child, as this will prolong the difficulties of parting with you. Sometimes a small toy from home can be a comfort.

It is very important that you arrive on time. Children will become upset if they see other children being collected and feel they are being left behind. It takes time for children to adapt to school life and routine. Don't expect too much too soon. Talk to them about what happened and allow them to respond in their own way.

If you ask 'what did you learn today?' you will most likely be told 'nothing'! Most of the work at infant level is activity based and children are not conscious of 'learning' as adults understand it. If however, you ask 'what happened, did you sing, did you draw /' you will have more success.

Your child will be tired coming home from school and occasionally may sleep for an hour or so when they come home. It is important to set a routine of quiet time together and early to bed.

If you feel that your child is worried about something school-related, talk to the teacher.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The following is an overview of the subjects your child will be taught in school.

The curriculum is presented in **six** subject areas, some of which are further sub-divided. These are **Language** (Gaeilge and English), **Mathematics, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education** (History, Geography and Science), **Arts Education** (Visual Arts, Music and Drama) and **Social, Personal and Health Education**.

English: The English curriculum is structured to offer children a total language experience in which oral language, reading and writing are fully integrated.

An Ghaeilge: Cumarsáid agus usáid na teanga mar theanga bheo an dá ghné is suntasaí den churaclam Gaeilge. Conversational Irish and the use of Irish as a living language are the two major features of the Irish curriculum.

Mathematics: The five strands in the mathematics curriculum are number, algebra, shape and space, measures and data.

Science: The four strands of the curriculum are living things, energy and forces, materials and environmental awareness.

History: Emphasis on local history and a focus on the skills of the historian.

Geography: The three strands are human environments, natural environments and environmental awareness and care.

Music: The three strands are listening / responding, performing and composing.

Visual Arts: The six strands are drawing, paint, print, clay, construction, fabric and fibre.

Drama: Can be in class or full school productions.

Physical Education: May be with class teacher or an outside specialist.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): SPHE takes place in a number of ways in the school and the involvement of parents at all stages of the programme is essential for its effectiveness. Children learn through experiencing a positive school climate and atmosphere and by exploring aspects of the curriculum through relevant subject areas. It includes **RSE** (Relationships and Sexuality Education), *Stay Safe* and the *Substance Abuse Prevention Programme*. The RSE programme is monitored by a committee comprising of representatives of parents, teachers and the Board of Management.

Religious Formation

Parents have a key role to play in the religious formation of their children. The school follows the Alive O programme. Parents are asked to follow the Alive O programme from the child's book, and to help with the workbook when it is sent home.

The pupils receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion when they are in Second Class, and they receive Confirmation when they are in Sixth Class. The preparation of the children for sacraments is a shared responsibility for pupils, teachers, parents and parish clergy. The 'Do this in Memory' programme is run in the parish for children receiving the sacraments of Penance and First Holy Communion. A committee of parents is elected each year to co-ordinate this project, under the direction of the Chairperson Fr. La. Children of Sixth Class preparing for Confirmation have a number of ceremonies during the year leading to Confirmation; these include Enrolment for Confirmation and Pledge Ceremony. Both of these ceremonies take place in St. Patrick's Church.

On certain occasions throughout the school year, the children may participate in prayer services, whole school assembly or a class/school Mass. Children often visit the church, both as part of their religion class or their sacramental preparation.