

Scoil Éanna, Ballybay, Co. Monaghan

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INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Thank you for choosing to send your child to Scoil Éanna. We, the school community of parents, pupils, teachers, support staff and Board of Management would like to welcome you and your child/ren to our school.

This brochure is designed to give you, the parent, an overview of the school and the various activities that take place here. The school has a number of important policies which have been developed over the years by staff, parents and Board of Management. These policies are designed to ensure the smooth running of the school. All of them are available for you to read on our website www.scoileanna.ie.

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 document 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 time on 1st September 2003 as an amalgamation of Scoil Bhríde Girls' School and St. Patrick's Boys' School. Both schools had shared the same campus since 1975 as two separate schools. The amalgamation has marked the beginning of a positive new start 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 had our flat roof replaced with a pitched roof, we completed a major upgrade to our playground facilities and we recently made some improvements to our car park to ensure greater safety for all users.

At present we have nine mainstream class teachers, five special education teachers and a principal. We are also fortunate to have three special needs assistants, a very efficient secretary, Gráinne, and Patricia and Peter who work as cleaners and caretaker.

The school is managed by a board of management which has representatives of teachers, parents, the patron and the wider school community. Details of staff and board of management are on our website, scoileanna.ie.

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

- 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.

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

- It is a support for parents in the school and represents parent views on particular issues or problems arising during the year.

- The PA work in partnership with the Principal and teachers in the development and review of school policies and procedures.
- They can invite speakers to address the parents on issues which are topical or relevant.
- Parent associations can drive fundraising activities for the school
- Parent associations provide help and assistance in school run activities when required e.g. Grandparents Day, School Mass etc.

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 at info@scoileanna.ie. The school also has a Facebook page where teachers regularly post updates regarding work done in class and where other information is shared with parents from time to time. It is important to note that children and their family members should never be named in any online postings as per our Acceptable Usage Policy available on our website.

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 occasionally be made for supervision of the teacher's class if necessary.

Homework is another way in which parents can keep in touch with what their child is doing at school.

The School Day

The school day begins at 9.15am. **Supervision is provided from 9.05am** each morning. The Board of Management is 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. A snack is provided for all children in the school prior to this break. Lunchtime is from 12.30pm to 1.00pm. All play areas are fully supervised by staff during breaks.

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 or if another adult is going to collect their child on a particular day. The crèche also does a pick up at this time.

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. The crèche also does a pick up at the school. Children who remain at school after 3.00pm awaiting the arrival of school transport are supervised until their bus arrives.

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 each absence, for our school records (for further information see our Punctuality and Attendance policy available on the website).

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, and grey trousers/skirt/pinafore and black shoes/runners. Tracksuit bottoms may 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.

School Finances The Department of Education and Skills funds all schools through a grant system based on the number of children enrolled. In practice this money barely covers the essential costs of insurance, heating, lighting and a minimum level of equipment. Each year extra money is raised through fundraising; 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, gymnastics, 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. At all times 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. We make great use of up-to-date information that is readily available 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. (See Administration of Medicines Policy on website) For more serious accidents the parent or guardian will be contacted and a decision will be made about whether or not to send the child home or bring them to the doctor.

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.

Personal 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 at any time – it provides 24hour cover for 365 days. Should your child have an accident, claim forms are available in the school.

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

We provide 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. Please encourage your child to wash his/her hands regularly.

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

You should check your child's hair regularly for head lice – if your child has 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 examine and to treat their child's hair if lice are present.

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. Certain vaccinations are also administered during

school time. Parents will always receive a permission slip to allow these to go ahead. In preparation for this the school will share with the HSE the names and addresses of all children enrolled in the relevant classes.

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 your child to eat a healthy breakfast. Choose lunches carefully. The school has a healthy eating policy which requests that you ensure your child has a healthy lunch e.g. sandwich, fruit or yogurt etc. 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 In Scoil Éanna we endeavour to identify, as early as possible, any children who may need additional support with their learning. A number of our staff have additional qualifications and expertise in this area. At present we have five full time teachers who cater for pupils with learning difficulties.

Children receive support on the basis of test results in the school, combined with assessments from psychologists and other health professionals. Parents should inform the school, on enrolment of their child, if any such reports are available and should provide copies to the school. 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 education plan may be drawn up by the class teacher, in consultation with parents. The matter will then be taken up with the special education team and the principal. Any decision to allocate extra resources or commission further reports will be made in consultation with the parents.

PREPARATION FOR SCHOOL

Starting school is a milestone in the life of every child. It is often a time of stress and anxiety for parents too. However, parents can do much to reduce such anxiety – both for themselves and their child. This preparation should begin some months before the child starts school 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. Most children have now attended pre-school and there are fewer issues around separation and socialisation, but as with all new experiences a certain level of anxiety may be present.

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.

Most children from the pre-school will attend Scoil Éanna. If possible arrange some play dates during the summer holidays. It is important for your child to see some familiar faces 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 it properly, to tidy up their crayons and colouring books. Help them to use a handkerchief or tissue, to share toys and to take turns in the playground.

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

Your child should know his or 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. Velcro fastenings on runners are easily managed by little fingers.

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 yogurt 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, their family 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 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.

Basic 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, set the table, count out the correct number of spoons, forks, to match socks 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 a good routine is established from the beginning. 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 other support teachers or an SNA 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 to collect your child. 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 routines. 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 'Did you sing? Did you draw? Did the teacher read a story?' you will have more success.

Your child will be tired coming home from school and occasionally may sleep for an hour or so. 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.

Finally, we hope that you and your child/ren have a long and happy relationship with our school community. If you have any comments or queries please feel free to contact the school to meet or speak to either the class teacher or the principal.