

Gorthaganny National School



Information Booklet for Parents

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Dear Parents,

The purpose of this booklet is to familiarise parents with school routines and procedures. The content of this booklet has been formulated, taking into account:

1. Guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Science
2. Professional expertise of Principal and Staff
3. Input by school Board of Management, of which two are members elected by the parents of pupils attending the school.

Aims of the school

The aims of the school are briefly stated as follows:

1. To enable the child to live a full life as a child
2. To equip him/her to avail himself/herself of further education so that he/she may go on to live a full and useful life as an adult in society.

Please take some time to read the school rules with your child. Help him/her to understand and realise that rules make sense and that they exist for reasons of safety and good order in the school. The rules are necessary in order that an excellent learning environment can be fostered and maintained.

School Ethos

We endeavour to cater for the full and harmonious development of each child attending this school. While the religious beliefs of all children attending this school are respected, the school is under the patronage of the Archbishop of the Elphin Diocese and Catholic Religious Instruction is an integral part of the school curriculum.

Co-operation between parents and teachers cannot be stressed often enough. The importance of the contribution of parents to the overall education of the child cannot be overstated. We value your opinion and look forward to your enthusiastic participation in the life of the school. We have the same aim: to enable your child to develop his/her natural powers at his/her own natural rate to his/her fullest capacity.

Yours sincerely,

Geraldine Collins (Principal)

A Special Welcome and Information sheet.

At Gorthaganny National School, we are always delighted to welcome new pupils and we take particular pleasure in welcoming new students to our Junior Infants class. Over the years we have established strong links with families through the children who have attended this school. Those bonds have, in many cases, extended well beyond the limit of the children's attendance at the school. We would like to make the child's early experience of school a positive and enjoyable one.

The following suggestions should prove of benefit in helping to prepare your child for Primary School.

- Visit the school on the day allocated for first-time entrants to familiarise your child and yourselves with the school. (This will be dependent on Public Health guidelines).
- If another new pupil lives close by, introduce your child to him/her. It always helps to know others in the class prior to coming to school.
- Encourage your child to be independent early on e.g. dress themselves, put his/her lunch in school bag etc.
- Provide shoes with Velcro fastenings if your child has difficulty in tying shoelaces. Zip fastenings or Velcro provide for easier opening and closing of school bags also.
- Healthy lunches are important. A Healthy Eating Policy is currently implemented in the school and children are not allowed to bring chewing gum, crisps or fizzy drinks and are encouraged not to bring sweets, or chocolates to school. (Healthy Eating Policy available on request)
- Label all separate items e.g. books, shoes lunch box, coat, markers, pencils etc. Please note all books will be kept in school after day 1.
- In order to foster language development and literacy skills, the following cannot be overstressed, talking to children, reading stories to them and with them, providing interesting pictures and picture books/stories which will develop a love of books and reading in children.

The following should be encouraged in order for your child to make a positive start and be more independent at school.

- Open and close zip fasteners
- Wash and dry hands
- Sanitise hands using the correct procedure
- Use the toilet unassisted
- Put on and take off jumper, coat etc.
- Open and close school bags

- Open and close lunchbox and all items in the lunchbox
- Use drink bottles properly
- Have correct coughing and sneezing etiquette
- Teach your child how to wash their hands using the correct technique.
- Tidy up belongings --- put things in their proper place
- Listen to instructions e.g. take out lunch, put away pencils etc.
- Use full sentences when speaking
- Hold pencil/crayon correctly
- Colour pictures using crayon – be able to identify colours
- Jigsaws, building blocks, construction toys etc. which help to develop hand/eye co-ordination, thinking and sequencing skills are very useful to have in your toy store at home.
- Encouragement. Although it may often require extreme patience, children respond best to a positive attitude from parents/teachers.

Support your Child's Emotional Wellbeing by:

- Responding positively to your child's desire to play as much as possible inside and outside the home.
- If your child is stuck when doing something, allow them to keep trying, as this builds their perseverance and confidence.
- Discuss and name your child's feelings to help them understand their emotions and develop coping strategies to deal with different feelings. This is an important skill called 'self-regulation' and will be very important in helping children to deal with the anxiety of starting school.
- Talk to your children about primary school, what are they expecting it to be like, what are they looking forward to, or what might they be nervous of? Reassure them of any fears.
- If the school they will attend has a uniform, show your child some photos of the school uniform, or discuss what they will wear to school.
- Tell them about other children they may know that already attend the school, maybe you know some of their pre-school friends also going to the same primary school.
- Together with your child, set up a primary school play space over the summer including their lunch box, school bag, paper and crayons/pencils, books etc.

Parent Information

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1. School Reception and Dismissal

The school will open at 8.40 a.m. **No responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before this time.** Dismissal time is 1.45 p.m. for infants and 2.45 p.m. for all other classes.

Parents of junior and senior infants who travel to school by car should meet their children at the stile. Please observe social distancing while waiting for your child to be escorted to the stile. Children from first to sixth class will be sent to the stile as their parents arrive. Cars should park at the school side of the road thus reducing the need for parents to get out of their car. The school cannot accept responsibility for looking after the children after 2.50pm.

2. Curriculum

The What, Why and How of Children's Learning in Primary School has information about the Primary school curriculum and can be accessed at www.ncca.ie This resource provides information for parents about what children learn in school, why they learn with the curriculum and how they learn through different teaching methodologies. In Gorthaganny school efforts are made to ensure children taste success regularly. There is a focus on quality learning for all. High standards are achieved in literacy and numeracy. Emphasis is placed on identifying children with learning difficulties early and putting an effective intervention programme in place, in consultation with parents.

Subjects taught in all classes Junior Infants – 6th Class

Drama	Mathematics	Social Personal and Health Education
Languages (English Irish)	Music	Visual Arts
Geography	Physical Education	
History	Religion	
	Science	

3. Extra Curricular Activities:

We offer a selection of extra curriculum activities such as volleyball, basketball and GAA activities at various times during the year.

4. School Calendar:

The school calendar will be circulated by email to parents on the 1st Wednesday of the new school year. It can also be viewed on our website www.gorthagannyns.com

5. Parent/Teacher Meetings

Individual Parent/Teacher meetings are held annually, usually during Term 1. A written report will be provided at the end of the school year. Parents may contact the secretary to make an appointment with their child's teacher if they have any concerns at any time.

6. School uniform

All children should wear the school uniform: blue jumper/cardigan with school crest, grey trousers/skirt/pinafore, grey shirt/blouse and school tie. They will wear navy tracksuit bottoms, navy sweatshirt/hoodie with a red polo shirt on PE days which will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays going forward.

Footwear -----please note that shoes with high (platform) soles are totally unsuited to running or playing on a hard surface and should not be worn in school for safety reasons. Heelys or any type of footwear with wheels attached are not allowed in school at any time.

7. Absences

Please inform the school by email if your child is going to be absent from school. Email address gorthaganny@hotmail.com The email will be printed and kept in your child's folder. After an absence from school an individual absence report sheet will be given to your child which must be signed and returned to the class teacher stating the reason for the absence.

If a child needs to leave school early, the school must receive an email or a message on the school WhatsApp. No child will be allowed to leave the school premises unless this message has been received. If a child is being collected by a person other than the legal guardians it **should be** one of the persons listed by you in Section A (2) of the enrolment form. If this is not possible, please send details of who will be collecting the child on the school WhatsApp.

If you are taking your child out of school for an extended period, please communicate directly with the teacher on WhatsApp or by email. Your child will miss valuable teaching time when absent. Please note regulations under the Education Welfare Act in respect of taking children out of school.

All absences of 20 school days in any school year must be notified to Tusla by the school authorities (regardless of the reasons for absence). (Educational Welfare Act 2000 Section 21 (4) The school will also notify Tulsa if an absence of less than 20 days gives rise to concern.

The Principal is obliged to report children who are persistently late to the Education Welfare Officer.

8. Accidents

In the event of injury, wounds are usually washed with water only or with an alcohol - free wipe. If your child comes home with a dressing on a wound, please remove it, clean the wound and give further attention. If your child sustains an injury that requires stitching or other medical attention, we will contact you and ask you to take the child home. Please refer to the section on the enrolment form that refers to arrangements for contacting parents (or persons nominated by the parents/guardians), who may take charge of the child. **Please ensure that there will be somebody available to take charge of the child in the event of the parent being absent from home. These arrangements should be monitored daily and parents should ensure that one of the nominated persons is available in the event of a mishap or in the event of the school having to close unexpectedly owing to unforeseen circumstances.** We will also contact you if, in the opinion of the teacher /principal, your child is not sufficiently well to remain in school for the remainder of the day.

9. Medical Conditions

Please ensure that the school is notified of any medical conditions etc. that your child may suffer from (see Section (C) on enrolment form and also the Statement on the Administration of Medicines which is available on request). Please contact the school's Board of Management if your child has any medical condition that requires the administration of medication during school hours. **A child should never have medicine in his/her possession in school.**

Please note the section on the enrolment form that provides for the inclusion of any special requirements that your child may have. It is very important that any such special requirements be notified to the school as early as possible in order that the relevant supports can be applied for through the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) See Section C Part B of enrolment form.

10. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

A Relationship and Sexuality Education programme will be implemented in the school as part of the overall SPHE programme. This programme has input from Board of Management, Parents and Teachers. Parents will be afforded the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the content of the Programme prior to its delivery to the children.

Class teachers will deliver the sensitive sexual areas of the programme in the senior classes. As a parent /guardian you will have the right to view the content of the RSE programme. Parents may decide to exclude their child from this part of the SPHE programme, in which case they assume personal responsibility for the delivery of this aspect of their child's education.

11. Movement on school grounds

Pupils are expected to assemble at the school and exit from the school in an orderly manner as instructed by the supervising teacher, using only the entry and exit points designated by the school principal and teachers. Pupils are expected to exercise caution when entering and exiting school grounds and when boarding buses. **Pupils should never cross gates or walls or walk along boundary walls while entering or exiting school grounds.**

12. Parking --- One way system

For the **safety** of all and to maintain traffic free-flow, please can the following be observed when dropping/collecting your child/children to and from school:

- One-way traffic system in operation for all school traffic. **Enter at road opposite Marian Hall and exit at old water pump back to main road.**
- In the morning, the **set-down area** is between the ramp and stile area. It should be kept free at all times. **No Parking.** Please let your child/children out at this area and leave to make way for the next vehicle.
- **We ask that parents who usually park at the Dermot Earley monument must collect their children at the back stile at all times.**
- When using set down area, **please do not pass vehicles that are ahead. Wait your turn. Children must exit at the stile side of the car.**
- Should you have to help your child/children out of vehicle, please park at pitch wall and walk to stile.
- Please keep bus parking area free. At the moment the bus parking area is beside the stile nearest the monument.

13. Information/Communication

All information/communication or anything of a sensitive or confidential nature between school and home should be sent in a sealed envelope showing pupil's name and teacher's name. Information on the running of the school is communicated to parents by email and WhatsApp. Please ensure that you provide the school with an in-service mobile phone number and email address as you may be contacted by phone, WhatsApp and email.

If your phone number changes at any time during the school year please ,please inform us as this is the primary way of communicating with parents.

14. Breaks

Mid-morning 11.00 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.

Main lunch 1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.

Normally, it is expected that a child who is well enough to come to school is well enough to go out to play at break times. We should be informed by e-mail if, for some exceptional reason, a child needs to remain inside during those times or if he/she needs to leave school early. Please ensure that your child has suitable clothing depending on weather e.g. hat, coat, gloves etc. during wintertime.

15. Nourishing Lunches

We are now a DEIS school and all children in our school will receive a hot lunch and a drink of water. We ask that you provide your child with a re-usable water bottle which can be filled when needed at school. Our supplier Martina's Foods will contact you directly with log in details where dinners can be chosen from week to week.

16. Health Concerns

We ask all parents/guardians to be vigilant in checking for common problems that affect school-going children, e.g. head-lice, any form of rash, infection etc. and to inform the school as soon as possible of any such occurrence in order to prevent the spread of illness.

While we encourage regular attendance, a child who is clearly unwell will not benefit by being in school. Under no circumstances should a child be in possession of any kind of medicines or prescription drugs when coming to school. If a child is in need of medication owing to illness such as cold/flu, the child most likely needs to be at home.

Some children may need to have medication administered on a long-term basis for a chronic or ongoing medical condition e.g. asthma. In all such cases, the parents/guardians of the child should inform the Board of Management to see if suitable agreed arrangements can be put in place to facilitate the administration of such medication. **No teacher may administer prescribed medicines to any pupil except on the authorisation of the Board of Management.** The parents/guardians of the child may be requested to sign an indemnity form where a member of staff has agreed to carry out the administration of such medicines. This requirement may only be arranged in consultation with the Board of Management and a **teacher may only administer medication at the request of the Board**

(A separate policy on Administration of Medicines has been drawn up and is available to any parent/guardian to view on the school's website www.gorthagannyns.com)

17. Learning Difficulties and Special Education Needs

Please bring to the notice of the teacher, in confidence, anything which you feel might affect your child's performance in school; physical, emotional, psychological etc. Please communicate regularly with the school regarding any factors that you consider likely to affect your child's progress in school.

The school currently has access to the services of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and every effort will be made to make a psychological assessment available to any child considered to be in need of one. As a result of the most recent Departmental changes in the allocation of resources for Children with special needs/learning disabilities, this school has two full time Learning Support Teachers.

If a child experiences learning difficulties in class, the teacher will bring this to the attention of the parents at the earliest possible opportunity.

For parents of children attending the school for the first time, please notify the school of any special requirements or considerations in relation to your child as early as possible, so that the necessary supports or services may be sought and put in place.

The National Council for Special Education now has responsibility for the provision of services to children with Special Education Needs. Those needs may be identified by means of an assessment carried out by an educational psychologist, speech therapist or other health-care professional. Application must be made to the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO). The SENO will then identify the necessary services and arrange with the school for their provision. It is the SENO who decides on the level of services to be provided in each assessed case.

18. Home/School contact

If your child is unhappy or encountering problems in school, please call and make an appointment with the class teacher.

19. Appointments with Principal

In general, any communication regarding the child should be first addressed to the class teacher. Because of the administrative workload attached to the duties of a teaching principal, it is necessary to make an appointment for consultation with the Principal. Please contact the school secretary in this regard.

20. Homework

Each class teacher will outline what is expected at the beginning of the school year. Homework may be given on a weekly or daily basis, depending on the teacher and the time of year. There may be times when no homework will be given, for example, a child's birthday or as a reward. Information regarding homework will be communicated through WhatsApp to parents if and when necessary.

21. Phone Use

Students are not normally permitted to carry mobile phones in school or use the school phone. A member of the school staff will contact parents or convey messages from parents to children if necessary. Exceptions to this rule may be made only at the discretion of the Principal or delegated staff member.

1. Children in Junior Infants to 2nd class should not bring mobile phones to school except by prior arrangement with the class teacher.
2. Children in 3rd to 6th classes will be permitted to bring mobile phones into school if it is deemed necessary by their parent/guardian.
3. Mobile phones must be handed over to the school secretary on arrival in school and collected when class is finished. If mobile phones are found in children's possession, they will be confiscated and returned to children after school.
4. Mobile phones may not be used by children on the school premises at any time. This means that they may not be used on the school premises either before being handed in to the secretary or after they have been retrieved. Mobile phones must be switched off when they are handed over to the secretary.
5. Mobile phones are not allowed on school tours. Teachers will have a list of parent contact numbers if it is necessary to communicate with parents.

22. Complaints and Enquires

For all general enquires regarding the school: Contact school secretary.

Any enquires in relation to specific children or teachers should be addressed in the following manner:

- The parent should contact the school secretary who will arrange a phone call with the class teacher to discuss the complaint/query.
- If the matter is not resolved following the consultation, the teacher and parent will consult with the school principal

- Should the matter require further attention, following consultation with the principal, a meeting will be arranged between the above parties and Chairperson of the Board of Management. All formal complaints should be presented to the Principal in writing and any complaints, involving hearsay or other individuals, will not be considered by the Board.

23. Child Protection

Under the Education Act, all schools are required to follow the Guidelines on Child Protection as laid down by the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Social Welfare. The guidelines outline the procedures to be followed by teachers in relation to the reporting of suspected child abuse. A copy of the policy is available to view on the school's website www.gorthagannyns.com (A letter outlining the school's obligations under Child Protection legislation is issued to all parents in enrolment of children. Parents are asked to sign and return the relevant section of the letter.)

24. Behaviour

Code of Behaviour is available to view on www.gorthagannyns.com

25. School Transport.

Bus Éireann provides transport to some children in our school. Further information on entitlement to this transport is available from the School Transport Section, Bus Éireann, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

While supervision of behaviour, and related matters on school buses is primarily a matter for the transport providers, the school actively encourages and promotes an awareness of the need for responsibility, respect and personal safety among students travelling to and from school. A school escort currently travels on the bus. The children who travel by bus are expected to treat the escort and the driver with respect and courtesy at all times. The school will not be involved in any conflict/dispute between the transport provider and parents arising from incidents on the buses.

26. Alternative arrangements for collecting children

It is very important to notify the school if your child is being collected by someone other than the person who would normally collect him/her e.g. at home time, for dental/medical appointments or other. The school should be aware of any person(s) who should not have access to the school e.g. by court order or other legal requirement.

27. Assessment and Reporting to Parents

The school carries out regular assessments across the curriculum. Standardised testing in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy are mandatory in all primary schools at the end of second class and again at the end of fourth and sixth class. Standardised testing in these areas, however, is carried out in all classes from 1st to 6th on an annual basis and a standardised test for Infants classes (MIST) is carried out at mid-senior infant stage. The results of those tests are communicated to parents at parent/teacher meetings. Teacher designed tests are used in other Curricular areas on an ongoing basis.

28. Development of School Policies.

In consultation with Management, Parents and Staff a number of policy statements have been drawn up dealing with curricular and organisational aspects of the school and have been ratified by the Board of Management. Copies of these are available from the school, on request, to all parents/guardians of children enrolled in the school.

29. [NCCA.ie/earlychildhood](http://ncca.ie/earlychildhood)

Further resources are available on ncca.ie/earlychildhood.

- Helping your child to learn through play and language.
- Helping your child to learn about maths.
- Supporting your child's physical development.