

St. Finnachta's N.S.

Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare.



Parents' Information Booklet 2020/21

Welcome to St. Finnachta's National School, Sixmilebridge. This booklet provides information for parents and pupils who are enrolling in the school for the first time. While the largest group of new enrolments in any year is the new Junior Infant class, we also welcome new pupils to the older classes and have kept this in mind in preparing the information. Hopefully many of your questions will be answered by careful reading of this booklet. If you have any further queries please feel free to contact us.

We hope that each child will enjoy their period in our school, that it may prove a stimulating, happy and productive time in their lives.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Gareth Heagney (Príomhoide)

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About the school



St. Finnachta's is a mixed, vertical, national school under the patronage of the Catholic Diocese of Killaloe. That is to say, we take boys and girls from junior infants through to 6th class and the school is a Catholic School. Children of other faiths are also welcome.

Enrolments at the school have been growing steadily in recent years but the school still retains a close, welcoming atmosphere in which staff care deeply for the well-being and development of each individual pupil.

School Personnel

Principal:	Gareth Heagney
Deputy Principal:	Grace Shalloo
Asst. Principals:	Colette Ward and Loretta O'Connell

In-School Management

Team & Teaching Staff

(as at June 2020):

Fionnuala Mannion, Hazel Tuohy, Edel McMahon, Ruth Collins and Neil Collins.

Anne Marie Grogan, Mary Cotter, Frank O'Donoghue, Elaine Magee, Rose Clancy, Bríd Ní Ghormáin, Aisling Murphy, Milo Keane, Lorraine Burke, John Crampton, Orla Byrne, Catriona Holly, Ciara O'Connell, Blaithín Burns, Shonagh Marrinan, Mary Casey, Bríd Moynihan, Melissa O'Connell, Elaine Rattigan, Máire Begley, Fiona Delaney, Theresa Tierney, Oonagh Barry, Éanna Burns, Damien Hogan, Ann Marie Cullinan, Shannon Grace, Ian Corbett and Finola Cotter.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):

Charlotte Murray, Margaret O'Halloran, Myra Feehily, Tracey Brennan, Tracey Colleran, Siobhan Madden, and Patricia McDermott. Gonda Oyen (Bus Escort).

School Administrator: Tanya Walker.

Caretaking & Cleaning Staff: Gerry Murray, Ollie Hayes, Beata Narozynska, Sammy O'Grady, Celine Roche, Jacinta O'Grady & Tamara Keogh.

School Contact Details

Address:	Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare V95 TKVO
Phone No:	061 369544

E-mail: info@sixmilebridgens.ie

School Website: www.sixmilebridgens.ie

School Context, Ethos & Philosophy

St. Finnachta's National School (also known as Sixmilebridge NS) is a mainstream co-educational, vertical primary school with Special Unit for Children with ASD situated in the town of Sixmilebridge Co. Clare. Sixmilebridge lies between Ennis and Limerick City in close proximity to Shannon. The town has recently experienced significant change with a rapid growth in population. Consequently, the population of the school has grown significantly and is very diverse. The school values its positive and inclusive environment and enjoys strong links to the wider community.

St. Finnachta's National School is a Catholic school situated in the Parish of Sixmilebridge/ Kilmurry in the Diocese of Killaloe under the patronage of Bishop Fintan Monahan. Our Catholic ethos finds expression through the core values of our school and through our actions, attitudes, practices and interactions with one another. While the school is a Catholic one, it welcomes, and has due recognition for, pupils of other faiths or no faith.

The school is governed by the Board of Management and operates within the context of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Skills. The Principal, with the assistance of both the Senior Leadership and Management Team and In-School Management Team, co-ordinates the day-to-day management of the school and guides its direction.

School staff are valued as the school's key and most important resource. Strong team work and collaboration amongst staff members and a collective enthusiasm are recognised strengths of the school. These contribute effectively to the school's warm and welcoming atmosphere. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of School Staff is an integral part of the school's philosophy. There is a purposeful commitment to encouraging, supporting and facilitating CPD as the means by which the school will be prepared for current and future instructional, pedagogical, leadership and administrative realities.

The school acknowledges the key areas of Literacy (including oral language & communication), Numeracy, Gaeilge, Emotional Well-Being, Digital Literacy and Functional Daily Living Skills in the preparation of pupils for further education and life in a changing Irish society.

Parents are their children's first and primary educators and it is parents who have the

most profound influence on their children. Children spend only a small fraction of their time in school. This means that the influence of school children's development and attainment is secondary to that of parents. This is recognised by the school and parental involvement, which is promoted at the school, works at many different levels. The school seeks to assist parents in this important role through by supporting the activities of the Parents' Association Committee.

The school takes great pride in its strong musical and hurling traditions. Participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities is promoted. These help to build character, promote teamwork and foster positive social engagement – all of which are valued highly.

A constructive problem-solving approach to dealing with challenges and problems in life is key to the school's overall philosophy and one which all members of the school community are encouraged to adopt. Positive and respectful behaviour is expected from all members of the school community and positive relationships are key factors in the school's success.

Mission Statement

The mission of St. Finnachta's National School is to live out our motto of '*Ag Foghlaim Le Chéile*' (*Learning Together*) – that we are all learners, individuals supporting each other on our journey of learning. We aspire to create an environment that fosters a love of learning, respecting and supporting the talents and abilities of all.

Vision

In our vision for the future, we envisage a school community of happy, caring, mindful and independent learners – learners conscious of their own fulfilment and ready to make their fullest contribution to their families, their communities and the wider world.

Aims

- 1) We aim to create a climate of physical, emotional, social, and intellectual safety for all, a well-ordered environment, conducive to learning and the holistic development of the child.
- 2) We aim to create opportunities within the school day for children to develop independence and personal responsibility.

- 3) We aim to create a school environment in which children from all backgrounds are conscious of their own value while being made aware of the possibilities the world has to offer them.
- 4) We aim to foster a sense of responsibility to self, community and the wider world.
- 5) We aim to help children acquire knowledge and skills and explore their talents and skills.
- 6) We aim to encourage tolerance and respect for others.

Core Values

The school's Core Values are the guiding principles that dictate action by creating an unwavering and unchanging guide. These are the values we seek to promote amongst pupils but also amongst all other members of the school community: management, staff and parents.

Our core values can be summed up in the following words: faith, community, integrity & respect, courage and hard work.

1) Faith

'A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.' (Mahatma Gandhi)

Faith is an uncompromising belief in what we cannot see but feel deep within ourselves. Our actions are a direct result of our faith. Being able to have faith in one's self and in one's future is important, especially in trying times.

Teaching faith is really instilling a set of principles and values in children from a very young age in order that their actions will lead them onto a positive path. It builds character and integrity.

The same principles apply for every religion and ethnic background, so having faith is universal in spirit.

As a school with a Catholic ethos, we acknowledge the privilege of faith formation, particularly in assisting with the preparation of children for the Sacraments. However, due recognition and respect is given to children of all religious faiths and of none.

2) Community

'Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.' (Helen Keller)

Community is a network of human relationships. A strong school community is built on positive personal relationships. There are six key elements of any good relationship:

- Being Positive
- Helping One Another
- Trust
- Effective Communication
- Mutual Respect and Mutual Benefit
- Valuing Differences

We are proud of our school community and are fortunate to enjoy the support and assistance of the wider Sixmilebridge community. We acknowledge and embrace difference and are welcoming and respectful of all.

3) Honesty, Integrity and Respect

'Moral authority comes from following universal and timeless principles like honesty, integrity, treating people with respect.' (Steven R. Covey)

We recognise the importance of integrity and respect in every area of our lives and that dignity and honesty underpin positive and meaningful relationships.

Integrity includes but goes beyond honesty. It involves keeping promises and fulfilling expectations. It is doing the right thing even when others do not see.

Respect is about treating and thinking for other people (and things) in a caring way.

4) Courage

'I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.' (Nelson Mandela).

It means standing up and doing what is right no matter what the risks.

We acknowledge that life brings its challenges and that courage is a value to which we should aspire. Our school community admires and encourages independent thought and expression.

5) *Hard work*

'There is no substitute for hard-work'. (Thomas Edison)

Working hard means: exceeding expectations, persisting when the easy option would have been to give up, accepting failure as temporary, ignoring naysayers and enduring challenges.

As a school community we make high demands of ourselves. Accepting that we are all on our individual learning journeys, we aspire towards all learners being challenged and motivated to reaching their full potential. We are committed to making every effort in this pursuit.

Religious Ethos

St. Finnachta's National School is a co-educational Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Killaloe, Bishop Fintan Monahan. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life of Jesus Christ. Our Catholic ethos represents the norms of behaviour which have emerged and continue to emerge gradually from the repeated interactions and relationships between people in the school community. While St. Finnachta's is a school with a Catholic ethos, it has due recognition for pupils of other faiths or no faith.

Our Catholic ethos finds expression through the care values of our school and through our actions, attitudes and practices:

- ✓ The staff and management of the school want to create a climate of physical, emotional, social and intellectual safety for students, teachers and parents so that teaching and learning can occur within relationships of mutual value and respect.
- ✓ With this in mind, the teachers of the school see education not just as providing students with knowledge and skills but also as providing for the emotional, social, physical and spiritual development of pupils.
- ✓ We want pupils to be self-motivated and to be at peace with themselves, others and the world. Achievement of these aspirations by the school requires the help and co-operation of pupils, staff and parents.

Our school embraces:

- ✓ A sense of fairness and positive relationships with all other persons.
- ✓ Deep respect for all people.



- ✓ Forgiveness and new beginnings: A place where grudges are not held.
- ✓ Respect and Dignity: Deep intrinsic respect for all others.
- ✓ Affirmation and Tolerance: That we speak to, react to and act towards others respectful of their dignity.
- ✓ Personal Faith Formation: Formal prayer, religion lesson, celebrations of sacraments and the liturgy seasons of the year.
- ✓ Belonging: That all experience a sense of belonging and contribute to the promotion of the desired ethos of the school.
- ✓ Understanding: Teachers and pupils have positive experiences of school and positive relationships are fostered

Religious Education

The *Grow in Love* programme attempts to help children to relate their discovery of themselves, other people and the world to God who is the creator of all things, the source of all life, who loves and cares for each of them and is always with them. The classroom provides a positive environment for such a dialogue to take place between the experience or culture of the child and Gospel teaching. The programme emphasises the following elements: promoting knowledge of the faith; liturgical formation; moral formation; teaching to pray; education for community life; missionary initiation.

The school respects families of other faiths and no faith, and therefore respects the wishes of parents to exempt their children from the religious education programme. The school, however, cannot undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, nor can it provide supervision during the religious education lessons apart from the class. Pupils remain in the classroom but will be accommodated with alternative activities.

School Organisation

Boards of Management are responsible for the direct governance of schools. The duties of the board of management include the following:

- ✓ Fulfilling its obligations as an employer
- ✓ Appointment of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff;
- ✓ Approving teacher absences for a variety of reasons;
- ✓ Appointment of teachers In-School Management posts of responsibility;
- ✓ Ratification of school policies;

- ✓ Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation; and
- ✓ Ensuring that schools are adequately resourced, insured and maintained.

The members of the Board of Management of St. Finnachta's N.S. are as follows:

- ✓ Patron's Nominees : Mr. David Deighan (**Chairperson**) ; Mr Keith Walker
- ✓ Principal: Mr. Gareth Heagney
- ✓ Parents' Nominees: Ms. Monica Keane; Mr. Adrian Chaplin
- ✓ Community Nominees : Mr. Corey Downes; Ms. Maureen Ó Lionáin
- ✓ Teachers' Nominee: Ms. Fiona Delaney

School Day

Our school year begins on **Thursday 27th August 2020.**



School begins at 9.20am. Please ensure that your child is punctual. Children miss out on essential social elements of the school day if they are late.

The school is opened at 9.10am in the morning and children make their way into class when the first bell rings.

Morning Break is at 11.00am – 11.10am

Lunch Time is at 1.00pm – 1.30pm

Junior & Senior Infants go home at **2.00pm**. All other pupils finish at 3.00pm.

Please note the following:

- ***The start, end, break and lunch times indicated above may be subject to change.***
- ***Junior Infants will finish at 12.30 p.m up to and including Friday 11th September.***

In the interest of pupil education it is important that class interruptions are kept to a minimum. Each interruption means that the whole class loses valuable learning time. The main areas of concern are pupils arriving late for class and dropping off forgotten items. Items such as forgotten lunches can be given into the secretary's office. All meetings with class teachers or principal must be by appointment.

Junior Infant Induction Day

Due to circumstance arising from Covid-19 the Infant Induction Day, which had been planned for June 4th, has been deferred until further notice.



The First Day

Please be positive with your child in preparing him/her for school and explain to him/her what will happen re: teacher, other children, breaks, sitting down, tidy-up time. On arrival it is very helpful if you can show your child into the classroom and greet the teacher. After meeting the teacher and some other children and finding a place to sit please leave promptly because your child will pick up your anxiety. Most children, even if initially upset, soon become distracted by their surroundings and settle down.

School Calendar 2020/2021

Return to School

Thursday 27th August 2020.

October 2020 Mid-Term Break

School will be closed from Monday 26th October 2020 to Friday 30th October 2020 inclusive. School will re-open on Monday 2nd November 2020.

Christmas 2020

School will close early on Tuesday 22nd December 2020, which will be the final day of the school term. School will re-open on Wednesday 6th January 2021.

February 2021 Mid-Term Break

School will be closed on Thursday 18th February 2021 and Friday 19th February 2021.

St. Patrick's Day

School will be closed on Wednesday 17th March 2021.

Easter 2021

School will close early on Friday 26th March 2021 which will be the final day of the school term. School will re-open on Monday 12th April 2021.

May Bank Holiday Weekend

School will be closed on Friday 30th April to Tuesday 4th May 2021. School will re-open on Wednesday 5th May 2021.

June Bank Holiday Weekend

School will be closed on Friday 4th June to Tuesday 8th June 2021. School will re-open on Wednesday 9th June 2021.

Summer 2021

School will close early on Friday 25th June 2021.

*There may be a small number of closures for Primary Language Curriculum in-service training for teachers. Details to be confirmed later.

**Dates of Staff Planning Days (one per term) to be confirmed at a later date. On these days school will finish early for pupils.

Attendance



Your child **should** attend school every day.

Schools have an obligation to report absences of **twenty days or more** to the National Education Welfare Board. Upon your child's return to school, the **purple explanation form** should be presented to the class teacher outlining the dates and reasons for the absence.

For safety reasons children will not be released during school hours to anyone except parent or nominated adult, unless a signed note is provided to the teacher by the parent(s)/ guardian(s) in advance. Children should only be collected early if it is absolutely necessary and you will be required to fill out the sign-out form.

If your child is ill, please do not send them to school. Take your doctor's advice regarding rashes and infections.

Uniform



The uniform should be worn every day except on PE day. If for any reason a child is not wearing full uniform he/she should have a **note from his/her parents explaining why**. We depend entirely on parents' co-operation in this matter.

On PE days, notified by class teachers, children should wear the **school PE tracksuit**. The school tracksuit eliminates pressure to buy expensive designer sports gear and is also very useful on school tours and trips. Children in St. Finnachta's National School wear the following school uniform:

Uniform: Grey jumper/cardigan (round or v neck); Grey trousers/skirt/pinafore; Blue shirt/blouse.

Tracksuit: School Tracksuit top with crest; Navy tracksuit bottoms; School polo shirt (blue).

Uniform may be purchased from any department store.

The school tracksuit is available from **Tomorrow's Child Montessori in Sixmilebridge**. Opening hours for uniform sales are 7.00pm–8.00pm every Tuesday. Tel: (061) 713529/ (087) 7922493.

The sizes available are as follows:

- Tracksuit Top: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10–11, 11–12, 12–13, 14–15
- Tracksuit Bottoms: 2–3, 3–4, 4–5, 5–6, 6–7, 7–8, 8–9, 9–10, 10–11, 11–12, 12–13, 13–14, 14–15.

Pricing:

- Full Tracksuit (Tracksuit top & bottoms) €37
- Individual Items: Tracksuit Top €30; Tracksuit Bottoms €18

Only plain navy tracksuit trousers are permitted with the crested tracksuit jumper (no logos, stripes etc.).

There is no restriction on the type of footwear which is allowed. However, please ensure that children wear suitable footwear and clothing that allows for safe and free movement during break-times and sports activities. It is also very important that the children feel comfortable and confident in their own clothes. Long hair should be tied back. Minimal jewellery such as a watch or stud earrings are permitted. Other items such as bracelets and drop earrings can cause the child an injury or distress when broken or lost are not allowed. Make-up is not allowed.

Please **label** all jackets/coats/sweaters: Have your child practice putting on and taking off their coats. Velcro fastened runners are ideal for young children and they promote their independence.

Lunches



The school day is short and we want your child to receive the best education that they can. Diet plays a big part in your child's behaviour. Treats can be given outside of school time. We promote a healthy eating policy in our school.

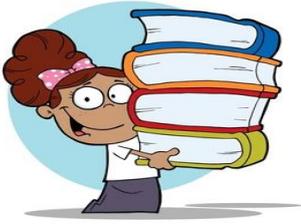
The School's Healthy Lunches Policy is available on the school website.

Please ensure that your child's lunchbox is clearly labelled

Don't give your child a big lunch as they only have a short time to eat. If your child does not finish their lunch, we will leave it in their lunch box.

The School Lunches Scheme is optional for parents and is provided by Carambola Kidz. For a small cost pupils can avail of healthy individualised lunches which are delivered to the school fresh each day. **Menus are available from the school office** and can be updated by parents online.

Books



You will receive a book list outlining the books your child needs for the year. School Books can be bought at any book shop.

Copybooks, pencils, crayon etc. for Junior Infants will be provided by the class teacher. All other classes buy their own copybooks as specified on booklists.

Your child's books, copies and portfolios are kept in the school until the end of the year. At times books may be sent home for homework.

Book Rental Scheme

In the present financial climate, we are conscious of keeping costs to parents to a minimum. With this in mind, a book rental scheme is in place for 4th, 5th and 6th class pupils. The scheme is being operated by Grace Shalloo, (Deputy Principal) and the Parents Association.



It is very important that you keep us up to date with contact numbers in case of an emergency. Remember to let us know, if you change your mobile or landline number or email address.

While we understand there is a need for mobile phones, if your child has a phone in school, it must be turned off until your child leaves the school building and teachers must be notified of their presence by the child immediately upon arriving to school. We take no responsibility for lost phones. We also discourage children bringing in toys or games from home unless the teacher asks them to do so. They can be the cause of conflict in the class. Also, the school takes no responsibility for any toys or games that a child brings into school.

Birthday Parties & Christmas Cards



Teachers do not take responsibility for distributing invitations to birthday parties or hosting birthday parties in class. It is the parent's responsibility regarding this outside of the school. Please do not distribute invitations or birthday treats through the school as it can upset other children.

We also try to avoid pupils trading Christmas cards at school because some pupils are overlooked and it can be upsetting.

Allergies/Administration of Medication



The Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of pupils. However, as a general rule teachers will not be involved in the administration of medication.

The Board of Management requires parents to ensure that staff members are made aware in writing, of any medical condition suffered by their child. This information should be provided at enrolment or at the development of any medical conditions at a later date.

Where children are suffering from life threatening conditions or allergies, parents should outline clearly in writing, what should and what should not be done in a particular emergency situation, with particular reference to what may be a risk to the child. This information should also be signed by the child's family doctor or consultant physician.

Accidents in School



If an accident happens in school, your child will receive first aid for minor cuts and bruises. If there is anything more serious you will be contacted. It is very important that we have a contact number of somebody who will be able to collect the child if the parent/guardian is not available. Parents are asked to make sure that the emergency phone number entered on their child's Registration Form is up to date.

Rainbows



Rainbows is a programme to assist children who are grieving a death, separation or other painful transition in the family.

Rainbows helps by providing a safe setting in which children can share their feelings, emotions and struggles. Our school is lucky to have a number of trained facilitators on staff. Parental consent is required for pupils who participate in the programme. Rainbows is NOT a counselling or therapy programme – this requires professional skills. If a child is showing symptoms of severe grieving it is important that he/ she is referred for professional help.

Home/ School Contact & Parent Teacher Meetings



Please check your child's homework journal or folder often and use the journal or folder to send messages to the teacher. If you wish to meet with a teacher, please make an appointment and the teacher will be happy to facilitate you. Parent-Teacher meetings will be organised in the first term, at which you will have an opportunity to formally meet your child's class teacher.

- ✓ Parent Circulars are issued to parents/guardians on a regular basis to update them on school events. Please keep an eye on your child's schoolbag for notes for parents.
- ✓ The Aladdin Connect Message Board and Text-a-Parent services are used to notify parents/guardians by mobile and smart phone of forthcoming school related events and of school closings.
- ✓ The school website - www.sixmilebridgens.ie - will provide you with up-to-date information regarding school events, achievements and policies.

Meetings with teachers/ principal are by appointment only. Appointments can be made by contacting the school on (061) 369544. A request for a meeting should be accompanied by the reason for the meeting.

Please inform the office of any changes to contact details (mobile phone numbers, address etc.).

We will send home reports in June each year. These reports can be discussed with the teacher if requested.

Parental Involvement



We believe that parents, the school and the community working together enhance the education of our students. Parental involvement in St. Finnachta's is encouraged, welcomed and appreciated.

We have an active **Parents' Association Committee** in the school. In recent times they were involved in organising the Christmas Tree Lights Ceremony, the Walk-on-Wednesdays Walking Bus, speakers and workshops for pupils and parents, the Book Fair and refreshments for families after the First Holy Communion and Confirmation Ceremonies. We welcome parental involvement in policy formation, fundraising and general events in the school (such as school outings, school celebrations, parents' meetings). Please sign up for the PA Committee if you are interested in becoming a member. We hope to arrange Coffee Mornings in the school next year at which they can

meet for coffee, become familiar with the school community and build friendships with other parents.

Adrian Chaplin and Aoife Keogh are the two parent nominees to the Board of Management. Parent nominees are invited to join and assist in policy formation and in dealing with general school matters.



In St. Finnachta's NS, the **Parents' Association AGM** takes place in September/ early October. Information evenings for parents on interesting topics are arranged.

Parent/Child Projects

During the year we will be inviting parents/guardians to help in the school with the some parent/child projects and grandparents are also invited for **Grandparents Day**. Parents are also invited to attend class displays such as the Infants' Christmas Performance.

Green School Flag Programme & Recycling



St. Finnachta's N.S has attained Green Flag status. As part of our initiative pupils are encouraged to reduce waste, recycle, and conserve energy and water. Waste separation is practised in all classrooms and we operate a litter patrol system in the school. All lunch leftovers must be brought home every day.

Subjects



The Department of Education and Skills is responsible for the education of children in Ireland. Under the curriculum laid down by the Department all students will be taught the following subjects – English, Gaeilge, Maths, Science, Drama, Geography, Music, History, Physical Education, SPHE, and Visual Arts. A religious education programme called Alive-O will also be taught to children. The Irish language and culture plays an important role in the everyday life of St. Finnachta's NS. We encourage staff and children to speak Gaeilge informally during the day. If you have any Irish please use it as much as possible informally at home.

Infant Education

Early childhood is a time of great opportunity for learning and development. In the early years children learn through loving, trusting and respectful relationships, and through

discussion, exploration and play. They learn how to communicate and they learn to interact with others and the environment. This early learning lays important foundations for later learning. We recognise the importance of the first two years of your child's education in forming a firm foundation for his/ her years in primary school. Our curriculum reflects "the many dimensions of human experience, activity and expression and is directed towards the development of the full potential development of the child" (Primary School Curriculum: Introduction). Play is a key aspect of infant education. Play is voluntary, spontaneous and meaningful. When playing children can experience risk within safe and secure boundaries. They can often concentrate for long periods of time too. Play is also often very social—children enjoy playing with other children and with adults. Above all, play is fun and an important part of children's learning and development. Learning is enhanced when parents/family and the early childhood setting work together. By being involved in their children's early learning, parents can improve their children's motivation to learn. Through different relationships children learn about their world. Trust, respect, love, and care are at the heart of relationships which enable children to grow, learn and develop. Opportunities for co-operation, playfulness, problem-solving, and conflict resolution are all valued.

Additional Educational Needs



All children are valued, respected and welcomed to the school whatever their additional need. We will support their learning and ensure they are fully included in school activities. Assessment is an important element of the Primary School Curriculum and takes many forms. From senior infants all children are administered annual standardised assessments in Maths and English by class teachers. Other tests may also be used with children who might be experiencing difficulties in learning. The help of support teachers will be provided to children who need it. Should your child require any special assistance, be it short term or long, a member of staff will contact you and invite you to the school to discuss your child's needs.

The school also has the services of a NEPS educational psychologist, who works closely with the school is assessing children who may be experiencing difficulties. The school also works closely with Health Executive Personnel (HSE) personnel such as those with the Clare Childrens' Services. If you have any queries about our SEN supports feel free to make an appointment to discuss them with a member of our SEN Support Team.



If you notice that your child is struggling with any aspect of schooling, let us know. Likewise we will inform you, if we have any concerns regarding

your child's educational, physical or emotional development. If this occurs, please don't panic. It is better to find out if there are any concerns at an early stage in order to provide support.



The HSE can provide a multi-disciplinary team assessment for free for children with particular difficulties. This may alleviate any concerns you have and also will help us support your child. Please contact your local Health Centre or drop into the school for further information.

We are delighted to be able to provide, **Cairdeas**, a Special Unit for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We aim to offer a positive, meaningful educational experience, which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability, understanding and calm. Cairdeas aims to offer an autism specific learning environment within our school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community and access to mainstream activities as appropriate.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, the BoM has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 as part of its overall child protection policy. The school's **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)** is the Principal Mr. Gareth Heagney and the **Deputy DLP** is the Deputy Principal Ms. Grace Shaloo.

Language Acquisition

If English is not your child's first language, we would encourage children to speak as much English as possible at school. We do not encourage children to use their mother tongue in school. However we encourage parents to use their native language at home. This helps in the acquisition of languages by the child.

Health & Safety

As part of our school health programme we encourage regular washing of hands, particularly around eating time and after toilet use. If your child develops any contagious illness such as chickenpox please keep him/her away from school until the period of contagion is over and inform the teacher immediately.

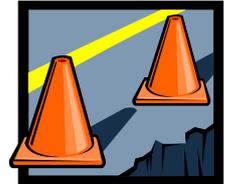
Unfortunately, head lice are a problem in primary schools. Please inform the school if you discover that your child has head lice. Treatments for head lice are available from the pharmacy.

When the class teacher feels that a child is not well enough for school either as a result of becoming sick or an accident the Parents/Guardians will be contacted immediately. Generally if your child is too sick to go to the yard he/she is too sick to come to school.

Road Safety

The school Board of Management encourages the cooperation of parents/guardians with the following points to ensure the safety of all:

- ✓ Please park responsibly and with consideration for others. In particular, please do not parallel park in front of parked cars and do not park in the bus lane or in disabled parking spaces.
- ✓ A school traffic warden service is provided by Clare County Council to facilitate pupils and parents crossing the road safely. Please comply with the warden's instructions and encourage your children to do the same.
- ✓ Please ensure that the school gate is left closed after use. Open gates are an invitation for pupils to go onto the road!



Behaviour



We believe that all children are equal and deserve to be respected. We expect that all children will follow the code of behaviour. All staff and visitors must also follow this Code of Behaviour. Bullying is not acceptable in our school. We like to affirm our students. There will be class rules and the children will have an input. Sanctions will be utilised for misbehaviour. The Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies are available on the school website.



Assembly

At assembly pupils are recognised for their achievements. School rules and practices are affirmed and pupils are informed on important school events. Also pupils get an opportunity to showcase the work they are doing in their classrooms to pupils in other classes.

Homework

Initially Junior Infants will not receive any homework, but from October onwards will get some tasks to complete. Try and have your child complete their homework when they come home from school, as they are still in school mode, leaving homework until late means your child will be tired and learn to resent it. The following guidelines are from our Homework Policy:

- ✓ Homework is usually given on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays but not on Fridays.
- ✓ Ideally homework will contain a balance between literacy tasks, learning tasks and written tasks.
- ✓ Parents can play an important role in listening to reading and items to be learned ensuring this work is done well.
- ✓ If a child has difficulty with homework, the parents should help the child to overcome the difficulty with further explanation or examples, but not by actually doing the homework for the child.
- ✓ If you find that your child is spending too long on their homework or does not understand some aspect of it, ask them to stop and send a note to the class teacher explaining what aspects of the homework caused the child difficulty.
- ✓ If homework is a stressful experience between parent and child, something is wrong! This leads to poor learning and defeats the purpose of doing homework. Should this happen on a regular basis, please contact the class teacher.

The following are general guidelines for time spent on homework. Different children will complete the same homework in different lengths of time. Time spent will vary from day to day and also from the beginning to the end of the school year. It is important to remember that it is the quality and not the quantity of homework that matters. The following are guidelines:

Junior and Senior Infants	10 mins. approx.
First and Second Class	20 mins. approx.
Third Class	25–30 mins. approx.
Fourth Class	30–40 mins. approx.
Fifth Class	35–45 mins. approx.
Sixth Class	45mins. –1 hr. approx.

Complaints Procedure

We hope that you and your child will enjoy eight perfect years here at St Finnachta's, but we know that's a lot to ask! Sometimes little things go wrong and you may have a worry or concern about something. In that case, please send a short note to your child's class teacher asking for an appointment to talk it over, or phone the office to fix a suitable time to meet him/her. The teacher will be happy to meet you once they have had a chance to make arrangements for their classes. Usually a short chat achieves a lot. Hopefully the matter will be resolved quickly with the class teacher but if not you can then request to meet with the principal. Most matters are small and best dealt with at

early stages. If you need to take the matter further, the chairperson of the Board of Management is the person to whom you should write. No other person or group acts as “complaints department”. On the other hand, if you’re very happy, everybody readily accepts compliments – feel free.

Student Teachers

The school facilitates the placement of Student Teachers in some classes from time to time during the school year. They bring with them great enthusiasm, energy and new ideas which benefit pupils as well as the school.

HSE Medical Services

The HSE carries out a school Medical Inspection on pupils during the year. Consent forms will be issued to parents in advance of medical inspections. Parents may attend and will be invited to do so. The following medical inspections are provided:



- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Hearing and Vision Screening | Infants and Sixth Classes |
| ✓ Dental | Second/Fourth and Sixth Class |
| ✓ Booster 4-in-1 and Repeat MMR | Junior Infants |
| ✓ Repeat MMR | Sixth Class |

School Transport



The School Transport Scheme is operated by Bus Éireann. Queries in relation to eligibility and the operation of the scheme should be directed to: School Transport Section, Colbert Station, Parnell St., Limerick on (061) 313333.

Home Issues



If there are issues at home such as separation, family bereavement etc. it can be helpful for the class teacher to be made aware the situation. Parental separation or family bereavement can be traumatic for the child(ren) concerned if not supported. Any information is treated confidentially. Teachers can then support the student at school or link the family into suitable services. Teachers approach the issue with sensitivity and with a focus on the well-being of the children.

Parent Contributions

Like many other schools, the Board of Management faces difficulties in financing the day to day running of the school. The Government grant for running the school is not sufficient to meet the basic expenses of the school. It is estimated that there will be a shortfall again next year. To overcome this shortfall, parents make an annual contribution towards expenses not covered by the grant for the day to day running of the school.



Details of the Voluntary Contribution scheme will be outlined to all parents in September.

Extra-Curricular & Co-Curricular Activities



In St. Finnachta's N.S. we avail of opportunities to expose pupils to a variety of educational and sporting experiences in addition to the formal curriculum. We strive to recognise and foster the children's individual talents. Some children are very able readers, some excellent mathematicians, more are fine artists or singers or sportspeople. We try to give them at least a "taste" of extra-curricular activities while they are here so they experience success and enjoyment, develop an interest for their future, a sense of teamwork and build their self-esteem enormously along the way.

A large number of staff members are involved in extra-curricular activities. The middle and senior classes go to Shannon Swimming Pool for swimming lessons. School teams annually participate in hurling, camogie, tag rugby, basketball, soccer, athletics, chess, horse-riding, Spelling Bee, Scór na bPáistí and Féile na hÍnse competitions. The school choir enhances our ceremonies and celebrations throughout the year including sacraments, assemblies, masses and award ceremonies. Knitting lessons for some classes take place during lunch-time. School concert and shows are very enjoyable events for all involved.

The Junior Achievement Primary School Programmes teach pupils about the vast array of opportunities there are for them to use their talents, imagination and creativity when they grow up. JA facilitators visit classes throughout the year. Workshops are organised annually. In the recent past we have organised whole school skipping workshops, dance workshops, demonstrations during Science Week and Engineers Day, drumming workshops and visits by other guest speakers. The annual Christmas Performance is a showcase for pupils' singing, acting and performing talents.

Pupils are encouraged to participate in competitions in Visual Arts, Write a Book, Quizzes and others as appropriate. Pupils regularly visit our local library. Our annual 'Fun for All'

day is one of the highlights of the school year. Classes are also taken on educational trips during the school year.

Other activities include:

- ✓ The school also avails of the services of coaches from different sports who come to the school including hurling, tag rugby and soccer.
- ✓ The Green Schools Programme.
- ✓ School Band.
- ✓ School concerts & shows.
- ✓ One day retreat for 6th class.
- ✓ Infants also pair with senior classes for 'Reading Buddies'.
- ✓ Literacy Lift Off & Accelerated Reader Reading Programmes.
- ✓ The Health Promoting School Programme.
- ✓ Transition from Primary to Secondary Education Programme
- ✓ Charity collections for the Hope Foundation/ Trócaire/ Local charities etc.
- ✓ ICT Education
- ✓ Cross Country Running
- ✓ Swimming lessons for middle and senior classes at Shannon swimming pool.
- ✓ Visiting speakers to the school, including writers/ poets/ local historians etc.
- ✓ Trips to the theatre and places of historical interest.
- ✓ Local nature walks.
- ✓ Art and craft every week as part of the curriculum. Entering Art competitions sponsored by Texaco / Credit union /other commercial sponsors/Community games.
- ✓ School tour every year for all children.
- ✓ Project work for middle and senior pupils.
- ✓ Write-a-Book project. The children are very proud of their very own publications.
- ✓ Bicycle safety lessons and First Aid demonstrations.
- ✓ School Choir. The choir provide beautiful music for the First Communion, First Confession and Confirmation ceremonies as well as Concert and Christmas carol performances.
- ✓ Book weeks, library trips and author visits.

.....To name but a few!!

School Facilities



We are delighted to have moved to our new building in March 2019.

The new building provides access to many new facilities and resources including: 24 mainstream classrooms, SET rooms, 2 GP halls with servery, computer room and library, Special Class Suite and external play spaces including 4G all-weather play area.

How Can I Help the School?

As parents you want to be involved in your child's education. There are numerous ways in which you can become involved.

The Parents' Association Committee always needs support – at meetings or simply support for events.

Examples of support –



- Parents who have trades or professional skills & knowledge in specific areas– can help us with general work in and around the school.
- Extra-Curricular Activities – Come in and work with the children.
- Support and help for the school events/help with setting up etc.
- Board of Management – Parents are invited to become members of the Board of Management.
- Participate in parent/child activities.
- Field Trips – accompany classes on outings.

Any ideas and suggestion you might have for becoming involved in the school are welcome. Please contact the school.

Ways in which you can prepare your child for school



1) Talk about school, concentrate on the positive aspects of school, such as the friends your child will make and the activities they will do such as painting, making jigsaws and going on trips. Ask them about their day. Don't be surprised if they say they did nothing in school as often they don't realise that they are learning. Early oral language development has a strong impact on a child's reading ability.

- 2) Give your child an input into their school life such as buying a new school bag, pencil case, new school shoes.
- 3) Practise nursery rhymes at home and read some well-known fairy tales. Familiarity reassures children and gives them greater confidence. Reading readiness is the key skill to introduce your child to the mechanics of reading, reading direction, the conventions of writing, awareness of text and most importantly nurturing a motivation to read and a love for books.



- 4) Play helps a child develop motor skills, oral language skills, visual discrimination skills and vocabulary. Play also encourages children's social skills in order to establish friendships. Games such as snap, matching, jigsaws etc. have much educational value.

- 5) Make sure your child has plenty of sleep. Starting school can be traumatic and exciting, and also very tiring.

- 6) Each morning try not to stay too long in the classroom or at the gate. Remember it is a valuable part of your parenting skills that you have developed your child to be independent enough to go to school. Give your child a hug and let them go into the school. If there are any concerns we will contact you.



- 7) Encourage independence where your child hangs up their own jacket, carries in their own bag and takes down their own chair.
- 8) Limit television viewing, especially before your child comes to school and before they go to bed.
- 9) Encourage your child to colour, write, scribble, paint, manipulate play dough, cut safely as this strengthens the child's hand muscles to enrich gross and fine motor skills.
- 10) Become involved in school life!

Remember, schools are happy places! Let your child have fun and enjoy school. Children learn long term social skills at school that will impact on their adult life.

PARENTS ARE TEACHERS TOO

*I dreamed I stood in a studio,
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they had was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.*

*One was a teacher, the tools he used
Were books and music and art;
One was a parent, with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.*

*Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent, laboured by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.*

*And when at last their task was done,
They were proud that what they had wrought,
Could neither be, sold or bought.*

*And each agreed they would have failed
If they had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood **THE SCHOOL**,
And behind the teacher **THE HOME**.*

Notes