

**PARENTS' HANDBOOK  
2019/2020**

**RATHFARNHAM**



**EDUCATE TOGETHER  
NATIONAL SCHOOL**

*Welcome to Rathfarnham Educate Together National School. We hope that your family's association with the school will be enjoyed and that your child will be happy and fulfilled during his/her years with us. Here are some points of information that may help you prepare for the day-to-day routine of primary school. Some of the information is common to all schools, while other elements are specific to our own school. Co-operation with school routines makes the school function smoothly, so we would like to thank you in advance for your support! There will be many aspects of school life, including our policies on numerous matters that you will want to learn about, so please ask us about these at your leisure. Please note the information contained in this booklet is correct at the time of publication January 2020. Parents/Guardians will appreciate that some changes may occur, and will be given up dates on changes as & when they occur. Parents/Guardians are collectively referred to as parents throughout this document.*

Rathfarnham Educate Together National School  
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Rathfarnham  
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Email: [info@retns.ie](mailto:info@retns.ie)

Website: [www.retns.ie](http://www.retns.ie)

Principal: Maeve McCarthy

Deputy Principal: Anna O'Herlihy

Assistance Principal II: Mary Griffin/Carol Norton

Assistance Principal II: Anne Bradley/Patricia McManus

Enrolment: 216

**Personnel: School Staff (January 2020)**

**Principal**.....Maeve McCarthy

**Class Teachers**

Ronan Barrett.....6<sup>th</sup> Class  
Anna O’Herlihy .....5<sup>th</sup> Class  
Darren Hilliard .....4<sup>th</sup> Class  
Brian Ramberg .....3<sup>rd</sup> Class  
Ciara McNamara.....2<sup>nd</sup> Class  
Aileen Cronin .....1<sup>st</sup> Class  
Patricia Mac Manus.....Senior Infants  
Katie Doyle.....Junior Infants

**Special Education Teachers**

Mary Griffin/Carol Norton (Job Share)  
Petrina Brophy  
Anne Bradley/Jan Feeney (Job Share)  
Aoife Farrell  
Cian Hueston shared with Divine Word N.S.

**Non-Teaching Staff**

**Secretary**

Carol Moran

**Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)**

Maureen Rooney  
Mary Holohan  
Anna Huggard/Sarah Lacey (Job Share)  
Phil Burke  
Una Hennessy  
Clodagh Mulholland

**Caretaker**

Dennis McNair

**Board of Management**

John Brosnan.....Patron’s Representative, Chairperson  
Maeve McCarthy.....Principal, Secretary  
Ronan Barrett.....Teachers’ Nominee  
Noel Carty.....Community Nominee, Treasurer  
Deirdre Doyle.....Parents’ Nominee, Policy Development  
Jane Sweetman.....Community Nominee, School Development  
Paul Walsh.....Parents’ Community Nominee, School Development  
Guy McGrath.....Patron’s Nominee, Maintenance & Health & Safety

**Background Information** RETNS is a co-educational primary school operating under the Patronage of Educate Together under the guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The school is located on Loreto Avenue in Rathfarnham. RETNS depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and it operates within the regulations laid down, from time to time, by the Department. All our school policies must have regard to the funding and resources made available to the school. Our school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the DES which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with the Education Act 1998.

**Ethos Statement** As an organisation we embrace teaching as an opportunity to inspire and empower. Our aims are to enhance learning as a transformative experience; to promote and develop critical thinking skills; to encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning; to cultivate learning partnerships with children while nurturing and inspiring their courage to grow; to foster curiosity; to provide opportunities for developing relationships and clarifying values; to uplift children's spirit and ignite their action; to open hearts and minds; to encourage children to see through a different lens academically, emotionally, physically and socially.

Through the Learn Together Ethical Programme the four principles of Educate Together; Child Centred, Equality Based, Co-Educational, Democratically Run are adhered to and promoted in the school community. The school aims to reflect and affirm diversity so that each member of the community feels equally valued, respected, accepted and supported. The philosophy recognises the unique nature of each child and ensures that no child is an outsider.

The school atmosphere is of utmost importance in developing a secure and safe environment. Respectful relationships and the use of inclusive language and practices ensure a positive teaching and learning environment. We acknowledge the multi-denominational nature of Educate Together philosophy through appreciating the individual and shared beliefs of children and their families. We encourage growth in self-knowledge, activate equality through positive action and empower children to take positive, active and dynamic roles in the stewardship of ethics and the environment. We recognise parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children. Together we aim to guide the children towards informed opinions, foster self-esteem and encourage strategies for peaceful resolution of conflict. The moral and spiritual aspect of the Ethical Programme guides children to reflect and develop awareness of themselves and others. A sense of fairness, justice, honesty and empathy is encouraged at all times.

**School Patronage** Educate Together acts as Patron of the school and has responsibility for the provision of the school building and ensuring the Ethos of the school is maintained and nurtured.

**The Board of Management** The Board of Management (BoM) is responsible for the day to day running of the school and the implementation of School Policies. The Chairperson of the BoM is the correspondent with the DES. The responsibilities of the BoM include teacher appointments, provision of educational materials, hire of school facilities, maintenance of school buildings (heating, lighting, cleaning and insurance), the health & safety of all, the ratification of school policies, the employment of ancillary staff, the operation of the extra-curricular activities, 'Half One Club' & 'Half Two Club'

**Parents' Association** There is an active PA in RETNS, giving valuable assistance and support to the school. All parents are members of the PA and are welcome and encouraged to become involved in the PA committee. The PA committee in RETNS helps organise extra-curricular activities and informs parents about the school and its work. Class reps are elected at the beginning of each year. The role of the class rep is to act as a link for parents with events that are taking place in school. A class list is circulated by class reps each year and parents are invited to forward their up-to-date contact details in order to be included. This is also useful for arranging play dates & parties in accordance with school policy.

## **Our Ethos**

### **We are child centred**

The educational and developmental needs of the children of the school are our most important consideration. Each child's needs, abilities and individuality are recognised and respected in a caring and relaxed learning environment that is rooted in equality and respect.

*For example, we:*

- Ensure all staff and children are addressed by their first names
- Use a wide range of learning techniques to suit the different learning styles of children
- Provide for the special educational needs of children
- Actively listen to children to find out about their experiences and their concerns in an effort to detect and resolve problems as early as possible
- Encourage children to 'tell' teachers about any bullying incidents
- Positively and consistently reinforce good behaviour, effort and achievement for both individuals and groups (for example: school 'achievements book', 'golden time', reward charts, stamps, certificates, token gifts, etc., but no sweets)
- Intervene early and appropriately when student behaviour does not meet expected standards (for example: reminding, reasoning, warning, 'putting it right', temporary withdrawal from activity/classroom, referral to Principal) but never use isolating/humiliating sanctions or physical force unless restraint is required for safety reasons

### **We are co-educational**

Our school welcomes both girls and boys. Whilst we acknowledge that there are gender differences, we encourage all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities in a balanced environment, which does not favour one gender over the other or promote gender stereotypes. We are also dedicated to fostering respect, understanding and friendship between girls and boys.

*For example, we:*

- Teach children of both genders together
- Value the ability and contribution of girls and boys
- Make sure all children participate in a full range of classroom tasks
- Ask parents to ensure all children are dressed appropriately for primary school (no inappropriate slogans on clothing, high heels, off the shoulder or bikini tops, make-up, dangling jewellery, etc.)

### **We are equality based**

All children have an equal right of access to the school. Children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds are equally respected.

*For example, we:*

- Have a first come first served enrolment policy
- Follow an ethical education programme entitled Learn Together, instead of religious instruction
- Maintain a month-by-month festival wall identifying important religious and non-religious events without prioritising any one-belief system
- Have a weekly assembly
- Teach children about inclusion, diversity and discrimination to encourage understanding, tolerance and acceptance of the customs observed by different individuals and communities
- Encourage parents from various backgrounds to share their national, cultural and religious heritage with the children. Staff do not discuss their own beliefs with children.

### **We are democratically run**

We accept that parents are the primary educators of their children and in turn ask that they positively affirm the professional role of the teaching staff. Parents and guardians actively participate in the daily life of the school. We also teach the children about issues such as democracy, power sharing and freedom of speech.

*For example, we:*

- Teach children to express their views sensitively and respectfully and to value their right and the rights of others to do so

- Have a Student Council that allows students a voice and an opportunity for their ideas to be formally represented
- Organise meetings for parents of each class at the start of each year
- Encourage parents participation in some school activities
- Have a 'Your Children, Your School, Your Time' project that encourages parents to volunteer their time for the school

### **Ethical Education Programme/Learn Together**

The Ethical Education Programme is a fundamental expression of the overall ethos of the school, and is based on the Learn Together Curriculum as devised by Educate Together. This ethos is based on four guiding principles, which are summarised below: -

The aims of the Ethical Education Programme complement the four guiding principles and are as follows:

- to give children an understanding of social, ethical and moral standards in the areas of honesty, respect, justice, integrity, trust and responsibility
- to express the multi-denominational principles of the school by fostering in the children a knowledge and understanding of different value and belief systems and philosophical traditions
- to promote equality among the genders and among all people by encouraging the children to value people as individuals and not as physical, psychological, socio-economic, racial or gender stereotypes
- to develop in the children a knowledge and understanding of the self (both physical and emotional) and, thus, foster a sense of confidence and self-worth in each child
- to help the children to develop an aesthetic sense and to stimulate feelings of wonder and creative searching

The areas covered by the Ethical Education Programme are not prescribed by the Department of Education. It therefore falls to the school patron to formulate the Ethical Education Programme policy. The patron is the person or group of people who promote the provision of education within a particular area. In the case of the RETNS, Educate Together is the patron and its policy on the Ethical Education Programme can be stated as follows: -

It is recognised that responsibility for the provision of instruction in the tenets of an individual child's faith rests with that child's parents. Without prejudice to this responsibility, the patron will oversee the development of the Ethical Education Programme, based on the aims and guiding principles stated above.

### **Pupil Welfare**

**Pastoral Care** As well as catering for the pupils' intellectual & physical development our school promotes personal & social development. We aim to:

- Create a secure & caring environment for all members of the school community
- Promote positive & supportive relationships throughout the school so that effective teaching & learning can take place
- Promote a positive behaviour code which respect the rights & responsibilities of teachers, pupils & parents
- Develop children's social & life skills

Our Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) programme explores issues, develops skills & teaches relevant information on:

- Personal and social education (including Relationships and Sexuality Education)
- Anti-bullying (including the Stay Safe Programme)
- Drugs education (including the Walk Tall Programme)

- Road Safety
- The promotion of well-being and positive behaviour

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is taught as part of the SPHE programme, see RSE booklets for further information.

**Health & Safety** The school also has a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy, which is displayed prominently in the school reception area. Regular fire drill is practised in the school, and external inspectors check fire equipment regularly.

**National guidelines for the protection and welfare of children** The Department of Education & Skills implements guidelines and procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare. Child abuse is categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. These guidelines promote the welfare of all children. The Board of Management of Rathfarnham Educate Together National School has adopted these guidelines as school policy. If there is a matter of concern in relation to abuse of children we are legally obliged to report this to Túsla, where the case will be assessed and necessary support will be provided. RETNS child safeguarding statement is displayed at the school reception. If you would like to receive further information or clarification regarding any aspect of these guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal who is the school's Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

**Healthy Eating** The School encourages healthy eating and we ask that parents provide a healthy well-balanced lunch for children. Children are not allowed to bring chocolate, sweets, chewing gum, crisps or fizzy drinks to school.

We ask that parents inform the school of any special dietary needs their child has. Glass bottles are forbidden for safety reasons. Children bring home any uneaten lunch. Children have access to fresh drinking water in the classrooms. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council provides a limited number of lunches to the school for distribution to all classes. We ask that children select from the following menu if they wish to partake, this is offered on a first come first served basis.

<b>Monday</b>	Cheese sandwich, oranges & milk
<b>Tuesday</b>	Chicken sandwich, apples & milk
<b>Wednesday</b>	Corned beef sandwich, bananas & milk
<b>Thursday</b>	Cheese sandwich & milk
<b>Friday</b>	Ham sandwich, apples & milk

The Department of Health and Children suggests that lunches should include *one* from each of the food groups – fruit and vegetables milk and meat with *two* from the cereal and potato group. For school lunch ideas/suggestions, you may like to refer to helpful websites, e.g. [www.shb.ie](http://www.shb.ie), [www.nwhb.ie](http://www.nwhb.ie), [www.ndc.ie](http://www.ndc.ie)

The children have 2 breaks during the school day, short morning break of 10 minutes and a longer lunch break of 25 minutes. Please give your child a small snack for little break & a little more for big break.

**Medical** Please ensure the school has up to date allergy/health information. The **HSE** provides a school screening (hearing & sight) and immunisation programme for pupils in school. Permission is sought from parents in advance.

**Rewards** The school has a policy of not giving sweets as rewards. Internal motivation is actively encouraged and children are encouraged to learn at their own pace. Children are equally valued as members of the class irrespective of their rate of development. Teachers may give individual children stamps or certificates.

**Birthdays & Invitations** The ethos of RETNS is that no child is an outsider. Inclusion is central to the ethos. We wish to uphold this ethos and would like the support of Parents to adhere strictly to the RETNS Birthday Policy:

- Birthday invitations are not to be brought into school
- Birthday invitations and/or presents should be distributed away from the school
- Parents cannot send sweets, goodies or videos to school on their child's birthday

**Dress Code** There is no school uniform in RETNS. All pupils should wear clean, comfortable and neat clothes to school. The primary school should be a healthy environment for everyone where outside pressures shouldn't be a major concern for our young children.

- Make up is not permitted. Hair gel should be kept to a minimum
- It is essential that all children come suitably dressed for attending a primary school; where the school age group is 4 years to 12 years
- Shoes must be flat. Ugg boots are not suitable due to safety concerns
- Bikini type tops and off the shoulder tops are not suitable dress code for primary school and should not be worn
- Very short shorts are not suitable for wearing to school. Trousers showing cleavage on bending down are unsuitable for school wear
- Children should wear appropriate clothing for PE Tracksuits and runners are very suitable
- Sprays i.e. hairspray, body spray etc. should not be brought into school or to the swimming pool. These are unsafe when inhaled by students or adults who have certain medical conditions
- Hairpieces, hair dye and other elaborate hairstyles are not in keeping with the dress code for a primary school
- Jewellery should be restricted; dangling jewellery is unsafe and should not be worn

**Personal Property** All personal belongings e.g. coats, hats, scarves, jumpers, bags, lunchboxes, etc should be clearly marked with child's name. Valuable personal property should not be brought to school. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to check the lost property rail regularly. It is located outside the multi-purpose room.

**Care of Hair** Parents are asked to check their child's hair for head lice regularly. If a parent contacts the school to say that they have found evidence of lice, all pupils in the concerned class receives a letter, stating school policy and the procedure to be taken. Pupils who are infected are to be treated at home. Long hair should to be tied back or plaited.

**Emergency Closures** In the event of a heavy snowfall, high winds, thunderstorms, disconnection of services, critical incident or death, the Principal will consult with the Chairperson of the BoM as soon as is feasible, and a decision will be made as to whether it is in the interests of all parties to close the school. If it is decided to close the school, the school will contact parents through text, email and the school website. If the school has already opened when an incident occurs, staff will remain on the premises until parents/guardians have collected all children.

**Car Users** Parents must not drive or park in the school courtyard at any time. Parents must not park in the clearway marked at the school entrance, no double-parking, or parking on double yellow lines and no parking in front of the pedestrian gate. Parents are asked to walk children down the pathway. All parents must notify those collecting their children of our school policy i.e. crèches, minders, relatives. We encourage families to walk/cycle to school if this is feasible. If parking, please consider parking in a safe place within the local vicinity and walking the rest of the way.

**Cycling to School** Cyclists must dismount and walk with their bicycle down the pathway. Children who cycle to school must wear a helmet. All bicycles, scooters etc., must be securely locked at the bicycle rack at the school entrance gate.

**Buggies** We ask that buggies are not brought into the building; there is a buggy park at the side door.

### **Attendance & Punctuality**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school day begins at 8.50am</li><li>• The school closes at 1.30am for Infant classes and at 2.30pm for all other classes</li><li>• Responsibility cannot be taken for pupils outside of the daily school hours.</li><li>• Teachers assume a duty of care at 8.50am. Parents are informed that the school does not accept responsibility for pupils dropped off earlier than 8.50am</li></ul> |
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**School Opening Times** School is open at **8.50am daily**. **All children** enter the building by the side door at 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> class. We encourage all children to walk quietly into the building and go straight to their classroom where their teacher will be waiting for them. This is the time of the day when the children can hang up their coat, have a chat with their friends, settle at their seat and arrange their bag, pencil case, books etc. for the day. This is a great time for the teacher to have brief settling in chats with the children; they can also hand up their homework, read and begin writing practice. It is essential that by 9am all children are in their classroom ready and prepared to start the day's work. All special education teachers begin their work at this time also.

**Punctuality** Children arriving after 8.50am miss out on the important time outlined above and on valuable learning time. We would ask that parents entering the school building after this time either allow their child make their own way to the classroom or if with a younger child, accompany them to their classroom door and allow them enter on their own as lateness is causing a disruption to classes. It is so important that families support their children in arriving to school on time, children love it and it gives them a great start to their learning day! Direct contact with parents will be made if their child(ren) are persistently late for school. As the side door is locked and the side gate closed **at 9.10 sharp** we would ask that any remaining parents exit the building promptly. Anyone coming into the school after 9.10am should enter through the front door and sign their name on the sign in sheet in reception.

**Home time** 1.30pm parents will collect their child/ren from the front door. Children attending the 'Half One Club' are collected from the front door at 2.25pm. All children from 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class exit and where applicable are collected from the side door. Again punctuality is very important at the end of the school day and we ask that children be collected promptly at either 1.30pm/2.30pm.

**General Safety on School Premises** Please note that the driveway at the front of the school is for vehicles (of staff) to enter and exit. All pedestrian users must use the pedestrian entrance at all times. Extreme care should be taken in this area and in particular children should not be allowed to climb on the railings or wall of the school, nor should they ever be allowed to play in the car parking area. All parents/guardians and children must enter and exit the school using the pathway along the left hand side of the school. Dogs must not be brought onto the school premises at any time. Smoking is strictly forbidden in the school building & its environs. **Front Door** We ask that the front door **only** be used during times that there is no other access to the building i.e. from 9.10-2.20. Please be aware that children must remember all their belongings at the end of the school day, children are not allowed to return to their classroom unaccompanied. If there is a need to return to the classroom the accompanying adult must notify the class teacher if possible or another member of staff.

**Supervision** Pupils who are on the school premises (i.e. the school yard and building) from **8.50am until 2.30pm** are the responsibility of the school. Children who are waiting for the gate to open before 8:50a.m. are not supervised by school staff and it is important to know that the school cannot accept responsibility for pupils before official opening time. Parents/guardians must make arrangements to have their children met and escorted home at the appropriate time, as the school cannot accept responsibility for looking after children outside of their normal school hours. (The Half One Club and extra-curricular activities have supervision during their hours of operation, but again they cannot accept responsibility for looking after children beyond their specific hours)

#### **Children being collected before home time**

- Sign-in sheet in the classroom to be signed by parent/guardian before child is allowed to leave
- If a person other than parent/guardian is collecting a child, written permission from parent/guardian must be given to class teacher and person must also sign sheet
- In emergency situation parent/guardian may make a phone call to the school office (4938677) to say that someone other than themselves is collecting a child. The school office will inform the class teacher
- If a parent/guardian is asked to collect a sick child they must also sign the sheet
- If possible try to make dental or medical appointments after school hours so as not to disrupt your child's work. Children visiting the dentist and returning to school must follow the above procedure



- If a child is being collected from the playground the person collecting must sign the sheet at the office and the class teacher must be informed

**Absent Days & Illness:** Children who are unwell should not be sent to school. It can be distressing for children who are ill to wait while we arrange for them to go home. Parents must report any contagious illnesses/infections immediately to the Principal or class teacher. Notes are circulated to parents informing them of any contagious infection within the child's class. Disruption and upsets such as family illness, bereavement, separation, or even a lost/sick pet can cause upset and insecurity for a child, so it is very helpful if you can let us know of any disruption which may cause your child distress. When a child is absent a written note of explanation must be furnished to the class teacher, verbal or phone messages are not acceptable.

**Holidays** The holiday list will be on the website at the beginning of each school year. Parents are encouraged to arrange holidays during these periods. Parents must note these dates and keep them in a safe place as a reminder throughout the school year.

### Home School Links

Good communication between home and school is essential to the environment we work to create. The home is central to the development of the child. RETNS and the family strive to be mutually supportive of each other so that the child's education can be effective.

#### **Parents are encouraged to**

1. Develop close links with the school and collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
2. Share the responsibility of keeping in touch & using the communication tools available.
3. Become actively involved in the Parents Association, BoM, fundraising events etc.
4. Participate in policy and decision-making processes.
5. Take part in 'Your Children, Your Time, Your School' initiative.

#### **School Communication with parents**

1. Class meetings are held at the beginning of the school year so that parents can be informed of the requirements of the new class and to outline the programme of work and expectations for the year.
2. A standardised written report on each pupil is provided at the end of each school year.
3. Individual parent/teacher (Progress) meetings take place in January/February for all classes.
4. Teachers may consult with parents regularly or request to meet parents/guardians. Teachers may meet with parents/guardians of children with special needs more regularly.
5. The homework diary is used with 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class to relay messages, we ask parents to sign this each night.
6. The school website is updated regularly. It includes updates on school, BoM and PA news and notices of forthcoming events.
7. Appointments with the Principal can be made through the office.
8. Correspondence from school is sent home on Thursdays by e-mail. This is an efficient and cost-effective way of keeping in touch. However, parents are asked to check the e-mail regularly, otherwise they may not be fully informed about what is happening in the school.

- A Notice board for parents' information is located at the side door
- The school website is [www.retns.ie](http://www.retns.ie)
- Most communication is by email: occasional text (head bumps) and occasional notes in school bag.

- Parents are invited to school concerts and to children's choir events etc.

- There is an information day for parents of new Junior Infants. Parents are invited to the school and are welcomed to the school by the Principal, PA and BoM Chairpersons.

**Important individual information** The school keeps a record of information that is essential in the case of an emergency relating to your child (contact names/numbers, important medical information,

family doctor etc.) as well as addressing any special health issues that may be relevant. It is essential that this information is accurate, so please inform our school secretary of any changes.

**Progress Meetings** Formal timetabled Parent/Teacher meetings take place in late January or early February for Junior Infants – Sixth Class; however, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year in relation to a significant concern, they may do so by prior appointment. Parent/Teacher meetings aim to:

- Let parents know how their children are doing in school
- Inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- Establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents
- Allow teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- Help children realise that home and school are working together.

**Informal Parent Teacher Meetings** To arrange a meeting to discuss a significant concern, a parent should give the teacher a note, ring the school secretary or speak to the teacher during an informal part of the day (morning time/ home time). In each case, the parent should give a reason for the meeting. The teacher will then give the parent a time at which they will be available to meet the parent. If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc. this can be done through the secretary's office as it is important to keep class interruptions down to a minimum. The school secretary can then relay messages on to children. Informal communication takes place early morning between teachers and parents while children are settling into their classroom.

**Your Children, Your Time, Your School** Positive parental involvement has a great impact and long-lasting effect on a school and on the children. We want to ensure that every opportunity is given to parents to be involved. **Your Children, Your Time, Your School** provides a way for every family to volunteer. A list of all possible areas for volunteering is outlined on the schools' website [www.retns.ie](http://www.retns.ie) and you are asked to select one which is of interest or where you feel you can contribute, or which suits your available time.

- It helps to get more parents involved, which has a positive effect on the children
- Provides a clear route for involvement - not relying on word of mouth, or presence at the school
- More coordinated approach eliminates the need for other parents or staff having to approach asking for help, often at short notice, putting people on the spot
- Provides ample notice of events, so parents can plan. Many people would like to help out, but often get asked too late to make arrangements to do so
- People get to know one another
- Increases community spirit
- Demonstrates how much actually goes on
- Demonstrates how much parents actually do.

### **Homework**

Homework is given to pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> class. Homework helps to keep parents in touch and involved in their children's work, it also helps to consolidate learning and work being done at school. Homework is an important link between home and school and aids the development of independent study habits & learning. It encourages one-to-one communication at home, talking, listening, reasoning and questioning can be enriching for the child. It creates links between home learning and school learning and children are encouraged to use homework as a time for communicating with their families and/or for research purposes. The school encourages the active involvement of parents in enabling their child to take responsibility and work independently. Parents are strongly encouraged to take an active interest in their child's homework. Parents are informed of homework policy at class meetings. Please remember to-

- Praise your child for completing homework
- When possible, help your child relate homework assignments to everyday life and skills
- In general, be encouraging and supportive, your attitude is contagious.

A review of homework was carried out amongst staff, parents/guardians and students in the school year 2017/2018. School is continuing to implement changes in accordance with the outcome of the survey.

**Time** These are guidelines for time spent on homework. Homework is given Monday-Thursday only, Infants: have Reading Only

- 1<sup>st</sup> Class: Reading only until after Halloween.10mins.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Class: 20 mins
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Class: 30 mins
- 4<sup>th</sup> Class: 40 mins
- 5<sup>th</sup> Class: 50 mins
- 6<sup>th</sup> Class: 60 mins

Different children will complete the same homework in different lengths of time Homework is not given at weekends. Special occasions e.g. birthdays, school celebrations, winning a competition may be occasions to exempt children from homework.

**Junior and Senior Infants** do not get homework. Reading books, pre-reading and reading activities and little word games are encouraged with their parents. Shared reading is not homework in the regular sense and it is simply meant to be an enjoyable exercise between parent and child. Discussion is very important, as are activities that encourage self-esteem, self-worth & confidence.

### **Parental Concerns/Complaints Procedure**

If a parent has a concern in relation to the social or academic progress of their child, the yard or policies etc, the following steps should be followed: -

1. The parent should make an appointment to meet with the class teacher. This can be done through the school secretary, at the informal period at the beginning or end of the day or with a note. The class teacher will inform the Principal of the nature of the meeting and whether or not the issue was resolved.
2. If the matter remains unresolved the parent may raise the matter, by appointment with the Principal.
3. If the grievance still persists, the parent may pursue the matter by lodging a complaint in writing with the chairperson of the BoM who will bring the nature of the complaint to the notice of the principal. He/she will then seek to resolve the issue.
4. If the issue is still unresolved, a written complaint may be sought and the chairperson will report formally to the BoM within 10 school days. If the BoM does not uphold the complaint, all parties involved will be informed immediately. If the BoM considers the complaint warrants further investigations, the issue will be looked at more closely and dealt with, as they deem appropriate.
5. If the matter relates to a staff member, after step three, the staff member will be given the complaint in writing. If the BoM meets on the issue, the staff member will be requested to supply a written statement to the BoM and given an opportunity to make an oral presentation to the Board. The complainant will be offered a similar opportunity. The process should be completed within 10 days of the first meeting between Chairperson, Principal and staff member.
6. Within 5 school days, the decision of the BoM that is final and binding is delivered in writing to all parties involved.

### **Money Matters**

We use the electronic system of Aladdin for paying money to the school. If you are paying at the school office by cash/cheque it must be in a sealed envelope with your child's name, class & amount clearly labeled on the front.

**School Books:** Book bills are distributed in June for payment by the end of August. The school buys all the books and sundries. All books and sundries are in the children's classes when they return to school in September.

**Insurance:** All pupils take out 24hour insurance cover (this cost is included on your book bill). The pupils are covered for: -

Accidental Bodily Injury causing Paralysis from the neck down	Limit €200,000
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Brain damage	€200,000
Death by accident	€ 25,000
Permanent total disability	€150,000
Permanent total loss of sight in both eyes	€150,000
Permanent total loss of sight in one eye	€100,000
Loss of both hands or both feet	€150,000
Loss of one hand or one foot	€100,000
Loss of hearing in both ears	€100,000
Loss of hearing in one ear	€40,000
Loss of speech	€40,000
Facial scarring from 3cms to 9cms	€1,000
Facial scarring from 10cms and longer	€2,000
Full-thickness burns which cover 27% or more of the body's surface	€20,000
18% or more, but less than 27%	€16,000
9% or more, but less than 18%	€12,000
4.5% or more, but less than 9%	€6,000
Dental & medical expenses not recoverable from any other source up to a maximum of	€40,000
Hospital confinement €20 payable per complete day, up to a maximum of €1,800	

**Voluntary donations:** In common with other National Schools throughout the country, the Board of Management levy a voluntary contribution to help defray the running costs of the school, as the capitation grant from the Department of Education & Skills does not meet these expenses. It is the practice of the school to have a family contribution rate, which is set annually.

**Fundraising:** In order to ensure that we continue to provide a well-resourced school for all children we need to raise funds to cover specific projects identified by the Board of Management, which can't be funded out of Department of Education grants. Volunteers are sought at this time to organize fundraising events. The emphasis in fundraising efforts has been to ensure fun is had and we appeal to parents to support these fundraising events to ensure their success, as it is ultimately for the benefit of each and every child.

**Trips:** Our knowledge and experience in RETNS is that a variety of educational experiences during the school year are hugely beneficial to the children. School trips, workshops and visits enhance the children's learning and support the delivery of the curriculum using a variety of learning approaches. Junior & Senior infants pay **€40 per child annually** and 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class pay **€55 per child annually** to cover the costs of outings and in-house educational experiences; e.g. game skills & dance workshops. We walk to nearby venues and avail of free educational visits, when we can. Some examples of visits are the science museum, art galleries, Kilmainham Gaol, Collins Barracks, IMMA, theatre outings, films, farm trips, mountain hikes, visits to adventure centres, Imaginosoity, Parks – Phoenix, Marley, Pearse, St. Enda's, Rathfarnham Castle and Ballyroan Library. Visitors also come to the school for dance workshops, storytelling, music e.g. drumming, talks on Buddhism and meditation. We also have Mosque and Church visits. This does not cover all of the experiences and outings but is a sample for parents of the many extra special visits and areas in which the children engage. All the educational experiences are pre-planned and support the DES curriculum being taught on a daily basis in the classrooms. Parents receive a short note telling them about outings, which include details of any special clothing, lunches, etc. that may be needed.

### Charities

Our school contributes to various charitable organisations throughout the school year. The student council organises an annual event for a nominated charity.

### Did you know?

**Toy Day** Friday is toy day, children are allowed to bring one toy to play and share. Encourage your child to bring a suitable toy. Any toys which encourage aggressive play are not allowed. Motorised/remote control toys are not allowed. For older children we like to foster games, which help to develop social play. Board games and puzzles are favourites.

**Green Schools Programme** is an international environmental programme designed to teach good habits to children and parents about the environment. Every year the school elect a new Green School's Team usually comprising of pupils elected from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class. The school has six Green Flags for Litter & Waste, Energy, Water, Transport, Bio Diversity, Global Citizenship-Litter & Waste and are currently working towards our next Green Flag, Global Citizenship-Energy.

**Student Council** This council comprises of representatives from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> classes and a member of staff.

The role of the Student Council is to:

- Provide an opportunity for pupils to voice their opinions and offer suggestions in relation to many aspects of school life
- Discuss issues relevant to the school and encourage and promote initiatives from pupils
- Offer an opportunity for all pupils to voice their opinions on proposed changes and thereby play a very important role in improving our school
- Act as a channel for communication within the school, between pupils and between home and school
- Encourage pupils and thereby their parents to organise events central to the life of the school
- Provide an opportunity to raise funds for charities or for school resources.

Through our Student Council we hope to give the pupils a positive role in the running of our school and thus ensure they feel they are listened to and respected for their ideas and concerns, and these are both valued and valuable. Council meetings help to develop social and learning skills in many areas such as speaking and listening, problem solving, decision-making and the decision making process.

**Sport** There is a comprehensive Sports Programme within the school. As well as the PE curriculum taught in all classes, the GAA provides additional coaching. 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class go swimming in Meadowbrook. We have soccer and basketball training after school. We are currently participating in the Active Schools Programme.

**Sports Day** is held every year in June. Sports Day is a fun day for pupils, teachers and parents alike. There are a variety of both traditional and wacky races, and the emphasis is on participation and enjoyment, rather than competition.

**Library** The school has a library with a good stock of books and resources. A number of parents volunteer their time to help in the library, giving children the opportunity to change books regularly.

**Wildlife Garden** The wildlife garden has been developed over a number of years and provides the children with an opportunity to learn about wildlife. It also provides many opportunities for learning outdoors. We are currently in the process of developing a community vegetable garden.

**Extra-Curricular Activities** Extra-Curricular activities are arranged by the school's P.A. committee. Activities include Playball, Encore, music/drama, soccer, dodgeball, yoga, creative writing, art, computers, knitting and basketball.

**Assembly** is held once a week on a Friday; different classes take it in turns to host assembly. Themes, festivals and special occasions and achievements are celebrated. The whole school community comes together for our annual **Winterfest** celebration which takes place in the school hall before the Christmas holidays.

**Digital Schools of Distinction** is a programme which aims to promote, recognise and encourage excellence in the use of technology in primary schools. RETNS was awarded the Digital Schools of Distinction Award in June 2015. We continue to pursue excellence in teaching and learning using digital technologies.