



Ballinamere National School Tullamore

Welcome To Our School

Information Booklet
For
Parents/Guardians



SCHOOL DETAILS

Ballinamere N.S

Tullamore,

Co. Offaly.

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www.ballinamerens.ie

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL

The Board of Management of Ballinamere National School, Tullamore welcomes you and your child into our school community and we hope you benefit greatly from your association with us.

There is a long tradition of schooling in the area dating right back to the Flight of the Earls in 1607 when classical scholars provided private education to children of nobility who resided in Ballinamere, Ballykilmurry and beyond.

Today, Ballinamere boasts one of the most modern schools in the country, incorporating a unique design into a stimulating learning environment.

CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF BALLINAMERE N.S.

Ballinamere NS is a Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. We strive to provide a structured, caring, happy and secure environment where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of pupils are identified and addressed.

While Ballinamere is a school with a Catholic ethos, it gives due recognition to all other religions and individual beliefs.

The School strives to promote, both individually and collectively, the professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes, continuous professional development and social gatherings.

The School encourages the involvement of parents/guardians in their children's education through home/school interaction and through involvement in the Parents Association.

The School endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community and fosters respect for people and property.

It is our wish that our pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence, self-discipline and respect for all.

STAFFING

Ballinamere is a 15 teacher school including the Principal. Ballinamere N.S. has 8 mainstream classes from Junior Infants up to Sixth Class. The Esker Centre is a 3 classroom Autism Centre attached to the school supporting the needs of 18 children with ASD. Many of these children are integrated into mainstream classes for a short period each day. The school also has a team of 3 Support Teachers and 8 Special Needs Assistants to assist children with learning difficulties.

GENERAL

Classes begin at 9.15 each morning and conclude at 3.00pm. Lunch Breaks are from 11.00 - 11.15am and 1.00 to 1.30pm each day. The Board of Management advises parents not to drop children for a prolonged period before 9.15 am, due to safety reasons.

Classes for Junior Infants and Senior Infants conclude at 2.00pm. Newly starting Junior Infants go home at 12.00 for the first two weeks in September.

You will be notified in advance of all school holidays, and days off. The school adheres to the Department of Education and Skills standardised school year.

A voluntary contribution is requested every September to cover the cost of music lessons, stationery, toiletries, equipment, art and craft materials etc.

SCHOOL READINESS

You can help your child be ready for school by developing his/her independence. It would help greatly if your child is able to

- button/unbutton, zip/unzip a coat and hang it up
- use the toilet without help, flush and wash hands
- use a tissue when necessary
- share toys and playthings with others and "take turns"
- tidy up and put away playthings
- open and close his/her schoolbag and lunchbox

You can also help your child by

- talking to your child naturally and casually about things of interest that you or he/she may be doing at home, in the shop, in the car etc. Remember that all the time children are absorbing the language they hear around them. It takes them a while to make it their own and to use it for their own needs.
- trying to make time to listen when they want to tell you something that is important to him/her, however, don't always make him/her the centre of attention.
- answering genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture her/his sense of curiosity and wonder.
- introducing her/him gently to the ideas of Why? How? When? Where? If? These demand more advanced language structures.
- having attractive colourful books in the home.
- reading your children a variety of stories from time to time. He/she will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- looking at the pictures with him/her and talking to him/her about what they say.
- reading, saying, singing nursery rhymes.
- getting your child to manipulate toys like:
 - Jigsaws, lego, beads to thread, plasticene (marla)
 - A colouring book and thick crayons
 - Sheets of paper that they can cut up with a safe scissors

CURRICULUM

In our school, the primary curriculum is presented in seven major blocks, some of which are further subdivided into subject areas. These are

- Religious Education
- Language
- Mathematics,
- Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) - History, Geography and Science
- Arts Education - Visual Arts, Music and Drama
- Physical Education
- Social, Personal and Health Education. (SPHE)

Altogether, 11 curriculum areas are covered during the school year. A meeting may take place in the first term where the class teacher discusses the year's programme with parents. Children can also avail of Music and Swimming lessons as well as GAA and Rugby coaching during the school year.

SCHOOL POLICIES

The school authorities have devised policies related to most aspects of school routines and curricular implementation. Copies of all the school's policies are available on request from the office. The school's Code of Behaviour Policy is provided to all new parents in hard copy on enrolment. The school's Child Protection, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Healthy Eating, Homework, and Administration of Medication Policies are available to view on school website.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Board of Management is obliged to report any concerns and seek advice in relation to child abuse to the Child and Family Agency in accordance with the Guidelines and Procedures issued to all schools by the D.E.S. The Child and Family Agency will then assess the case and put measures in place to provide the necessary supports for the child concerned should they be required.

Abuse is defined as - neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Should the school consider that a child's welfare is immediately and seriously

compromised as a result of any of the above; the Gardaí will be immediately contacted to support the CFA. The Principal is the designated Liaison Officer (DLP) for all issues relating to child protection.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

In our school we strive to cultivate a positive school atmosphere which focuses on respect for the individual and encourages trust, compassion, consideration and support for all, both within and outside the school community.

Pupils are encouraged to report incidents of bullying, and all reports will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the teachers as per the school Code of Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy which are available on request.

General School Rules

- Respect for yourself and others.
- Respect all school property and that of others.
- Listen and not interrupt.
- Behave in a responsible manner at all times.
- Refrain from using bad language.
- Physical aggression/fighting are not acceptable in any circumstances.

Rewards/Sanctions

In Ballinamere N.S, a balance is maintained between rewards and sanctions in such a way that pupils will recognise that the choices they make may have consequences.

MOBILE PHONES

Pupils should not have mobile phones in school unless specifically requested by a parent or guardian. If a child has a mobile phone that must be switched on for emergency reasons, a letter to the Principal is required.

If a child is caught in possession of an unauthorised mobile phone, it will automatically be confiscated and returned to a parent/guardian.

ADMINISTRATION of MEDICATION

In the event of sudden illness or a minor accident, a minimum level of first aid is administered and parents/guardians are contacted without delay. In the event of a serious accident/illness, the parents are informed immediately, and if necessary the child is brought to hospital without delay.

Children with a long term medical condition are accommodated so that their educational opportunities are not compromised. Parents/ Guardians are asked to update the school regularly on the status of the condition. A copy of the school's Administration of Medicine policy is available on request. Special procedures are in place for the administration of medicines such as Anapen etc.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Our school uniform consists of a navy v. neck jumper / cardigan with school crest, navy trousers / skirt or pinafore, white shirt / polo shirt and school tie.

The school tracksuit consists of navy top and bottom with yellow stripe detail and school crest and white polo shirt.

Elements of our uniform which are specific to Ballinamere i.e. crested jumpers, ties are available from G. & T. Drapery, Cornloft, Patrick Street, Tullamore and Darú School Uniforms, Cloncollig Industrial Estate, Tullamore (above Hamco, opposite Expert).

Generic elements may be purchased at any outlet. Plain navy tracksuit bottoms (no logos) are also acceptable.

The children wear black slippers indoors.

PLEASE LABEL your child's uniform, lunchbox and books. A clearly labelled jumper almost always is returned to its owner, an unlabelled almost never makes it back!

HEALTHY LUNCHBOX

As part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) Programme, we try to increase the children's awareness of the desirability of having healthy food in their lunch boxes.

Foods not allowed in school -

- Crisps
- Chewing gum
- Fizzy drinks
- Sweets
- Chocolate biscuits/bars
- Nuts

Please see Healthy Eating Policy.

HOMEWORK

Homework is assigned Monday to Thursday with the children being excused homework on weekends provided their work has been conscientiously and satisfactorily done on the other nights.

Suggested timeframe for homework:

- Infants: Up to 15 mins. (non-written)
- 1st/ 2nd: Up to 20 mins.
- 3rd/4th: Up to 30 mins.
- 5th/6th: Up to 45 mins.

If homework is not done, a note to the teacher should be written in the homework diary.

Please Note: It is important that your child has somewhere quiet to study away from noise and distraction - a busy kitchen or a room with a television is not recommended!

On special occasions students may be given homework off.

Please see Homework Policy available from office or to view on school website.

ABSENCES

Under the Education Welfare Act 2002 the school is obliged to inform the Child and Family Agency (NEWB) of all absences exceeding 20 days during the academic year. Parents must inform the school in writing of the reason for their child's absence from school.

Pupils Leaving During School Time

Parents/ guardians must notify the school **in advance** and **in writing** if their child must leave the school during school time. Children who are to be collected early from school must be met in the school foyer. Children must be signed out in all instances.

EDUCATIONAL OUTINGS

During the school year, appropriate educational outings will be available to children in all classes

The school requests written permission from parents/guardians for all educational tours.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

On very rare occasions the school may have to close at very short notice due to isolated events such as heavy snowfall, loss of electrical service or water supply etc. Should this scenario unfold every effort will be made to contact parents/guardians by text, through local radio or both.

Parents must ensure school is in possession of their most up to date mobile numbers.

All updated telephone numbers should be provided to the school secretary.

Remember, please check that the school is open before dropping your child.

DATA PROTECTION

The school is registered with the Data Protection Agency. All information is kept on file and is retained in the school for administrative purposes only. Parents can access information relating to their own child only.

COMMUNICATION

Ballinamere N.S. operates an open door policy and parents are more than welcome to visit the school at any stage to discuss their child's progress with staff. A prior appointment should be arranged with the school secretary to facilitate this process. (See Communication with Parents Policy)

- An annual Parent / Teacher Meeting takes place in November.
- Parents can request a meeting with a teacher at any time by making an appointment with the school secretary.
- Summer reports for each child including Standardised Test Scores for 1st class and upwards are sent home in mid June.
- Newsletters/ circulars are distributed regularly to the pupils. Please check your child's bag regularly.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

There is a procedure in place should parents have issues with aspects of teaching and learning, discipline or Health and Safety in the school. Parents are asked to discuss their concerns with the class teacher initially by means of an appointment. A copy of the school complaints procedure is available on request.

PARENTS ASSOCIATION

There is an active Parents Association in Ballinamere School which is affiliated to the National Parents Council (Primary). The committee usually meets once a month. The AGM is usually held in the first week of October each year and all parents are invited to attend and contribute to the discussions.

The PA liaises regularly with the Principal thus providing a forum through which parents can raise issues and concerns, suggest and implement initiatives and organise activities beneficial to the entire school community.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The BOM has overall responsibility for the school, including finance, maintenance, staffing levels and the development of the school plan and policies. The Board comprises of two direct nominees of the Patron, two elected parents (a mother and a father) the Principal and one other teacher on the staff elected by vote of the teaching staff and two extra community representatives proposed by these nominees. The Patron appoints the Chairperson of the Board. The term of office for the Board of Management is 4 years. A new Board of Management was elected in November 2015.

The current Board of Management of the school consists of:

Vincent Molloy, Chairperson (Patron's Nominee)

Fr. Seán Heaney (Patron's Nominee)

Carina Haverty (Parents' Nominee)

Paul McNally (Parents' Nominee)

Oran Fahey (Teachers' Nominee)

Carmel Hctor, Treasurer (Community Representative)

Dermot Murphy (Community Representative)

Deirdre Cusack, Secretary (Principal)

Please visit our school website, www.ballinamerens.ie, for a glimpse into the busy, happy environment we all enjoy in Ballinamere National School.

The Board of Management, Parents Association,
Principal, Teachers and Ancillary Staff welcome you
and your child into our school community.

