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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin  
*Galway and Roscommon  
Education and Training Board*

**CUAN NA GAILLIMHE CNS**

**- A STEINER EDUCATION**



# PARENT HANDBOOK

**PLEASE READ THIS HANDBOOK CAREFULLY AND KEEP AS A  
REFERENCE DURING THE YEAR.**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

We are an Irish Community National School using Steiner pedagogical methods to deliver the Irish national curriculum. We opened in September 2015 and we will grow by one class per year until we have all classes up to 6th class from September 2022.

We are a multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred national school. We believe that education is best achieved in a warm and joyful environment where children are actively engaged in the learning process.

Through our arts rich approach, we cultivate knowledge, creativity and practical skills. The Irish primary curriculum is delivered in an integrated and developmentally appropriate way with a strong emphasis on movement, music, art, handwork, drama, and outdoor learning.

The holistic development of each pupil is nurtured in order to foster in them the self-confidence and resilience necessary to take their place in the community as creative, well-balanced and responsible people.

We were the first Steiner National School in Galway and we opened in Knocknacarra in September 2015, under patronage of [Lifeways Ireland](#), the patron body of Irish Steiner schools. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRET B) became our new Patron Body. The new arrangement helped provide a framework of support for the school while maintaining the Steiner pedagogy in the school. Lifeways Ireland continues to advise the school in relation to Steiner pedagogy.

The school will deliver the Irish Department of Education's Curriculum in accordance with Steiner Waldorf pedagogy. It is subject to the Department of Education Rules for National Schools governing the curriculum, class sizes, teacher appointments, training and recruitment. The school is run by the teachers and overseen by a Board of Management. Parental involvement is extremely important, and all parents/guardians will automatically be part of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which promotes the interests of the students in the school in co-operation with the board. Elections for committee members to the PTA will take place once a year.

## 2 STEINER EDUCATION

Steiner education is a child-centred education that seeks to nurture 'the hand (willing), the heart (feeling) and the head (thinking)' of every child. It is a holistic, child-centred pedagogy that:

- is co-educational, multi-denominational, democratic and committed to cultural diversity and social equality;
- emphasises nature-based play and education, strengthening the child's connection to nature;
- develops a love of learning and an enthusiasm for school;

- sees artistic activity and the development of the imagination as integral to learning;
- takes account of the needs of the whole child – academic, physical, emotional and spiritual;
- delivers the Irish curriculum, but in a creative and integrated way
- prioritises age-appropriate learning, adapting its teaching methods to suit the developmental stage of its pupils, as well as their experience of the world.

*Source: Pearse O Shiel, Chairman of Lifeways Ireland*

### 3 OUTDOOR ACTIVITY STATEMENT

In Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS the outdoor component plays a strong role in the everyday delivery of the curriculum. Each day time is spent outside, either as part of a planned learning activity or outdoor play.

In the infant classes the child's play is not directly lead or organised by an adult in order to foster creative imagination. Time in the garden and forest gives the children access to natural resources (sticks, pine cones, sea shells, rocks, water, sand, tree bark, etc.) that have no defined play purpose and are open to investigation, creation, interpretation and imagination. For both older and younger children, being outside during forest school and/or play, gives opportunity to breathe fresh air, witness the marvels of the natural world, increases the child's power of observation, gives them an opportunity to run off extra energy and has a calming effect. The children elaborate on existing natural macro-structures and creations as they engage in using gross-motor movements and muscles, working hard and generally in collaboration with classmates, which fosters communication, creativity, teamwork and problem-solving. Other benefits of this type of hard work are that it builds "will-forces" and resilience when faced with challenges; a skill that serves the children for the rest of their lives. Other times the children might engage in building tiny gnome homes or gnome villages at the base of trees. Building small structures utilises fine motor skills and provides opportunities for the children to imagine more intently by pretending that they are entering a fairy world and a magical realm.

Prior to and during outdoor activities the school and teaching staff are continuously considering the correct level of supervision. There is no simple answer as to what the 'correct' level of supervision is. But as a school we guide ourselves and our judgement by taking the following influencing factors into account: age, maturity and number of children as well as the topography of the area that requires supervision. Supported by Rules for National Schools and The Education Act 1998 we lean on guiding rules that; the degree of supervision by a teacher should be that of 'reasonable care' i.e. equate to the supervision levels of a careful parent.

The teachers, interns and volunteers take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of pupils and supervise the children during school time and school activities. It is important to distinguish between a 'risk' and a 'hazard':

A risk is something you can judge, how high can you go and still safely jump off the swing and fly through the air. This is a 'good risk' where children learn 'physical literacy'.

A hazard is something you cannot judge, is the swing pivot almost worn right through and about to give way unexpectedly? This is 'bad' and must be avoided by good management practices.

*London Play Briefing, November 2007 (updated October 2010) Risk in Play*

While teachers, interns and volunteers keep a close and caring eye on all children and their safety, we also allow for manageable obstacles getting in their way. While (still closely supervising and ready to help if needed) we are walking to the forest, playing or engaging in activities, children may trip, stumble, fall, and hurt themselves. As a school we categorise this as 'Good risks'. Good risks in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. We trust the children's ability to manage themselves in our presence and that it helps them strengthen their focus, build up strength and resilience, and develop self-confidence.

To make these outdoor experiences the richest possible, it is important that the children are prepared and properly dressed for the weather.

- In the Infants classes the class teacher and interns ensure that all children are wearing appropriate outdoor clothes provided from home. The class teacher will inform parents/guardians in case the child does not have appropriate clothing available for outdoor school activities.
- From 1st to 6th class, the class teacher will remind children to look at the weather before they go out and to dress accordingly. Parents are responsible for their children having appropriate outdoor clothes available in school for activities during the week – including forest school.

If parents/guardians feel their child cannot participate in the daily outdoor activity, we ask parents to evaluate whether or not your child is healthy enough to come to school that day. If children are well enough to come to school she/he should be well enough to participate in all of the daily activities.

We observe National weather warnings as well as follow our school Forest School Weather policy for any planned outdoor trips.

## 4 CLOTHING/ PRACTICALITIES

Children at Cuan na Gaillimhe Community National School are not required to wear a school uniform. It is, however, very important that your child is properly equipped for the various school activities.

Clothes should be plain and comfortable. For the children's comfort, as well as for environmental reasons, we recommend natural materials such as cotton and wool. Clothing should be dignified, non-distracting (**no characters** etc.) and appropriate for all possible school activities.

### **Being outside is part of our day:**

Please be aware of the importance of warmth for the growth and well-being of children and consider that at the amount of time spent outdoors during the school activities, insufficient clothing is a serious strain for children.

**Raingear:** Your child will need a set of rain gear and wellies for summer and a waterproof ski suit or fleece lined wet gear and snow boots /lined wellies for winter. Infants arrive at school in their raingear each morning as their day begins with outdoor play.

**Headgear:** Hats are required all year round. In summer, your child is required to wear sunscreen on arrival to school and bring a bottle of sunscreen in his/her rucksack together with a sun hat.

**Footwear:** During the winter months children will need a set of snow boots/ lined wellies. During the summer months children will also need a pair of wellies. When the children return to the classroom after outdoor play, they will need a pair of indoor shoes/slippers to change into. It is important that these shoes are cosy but also have a hard-durable sole as the children do go outside to move between classrooms throughout the day.

**Backpack:** Children carry their own snack to the forest/playground and therefore need a small waterproof backpack. It aids the children greatly on their walk if the backpack has good quality thick shoulder straps and a clasp that closes around the chest.

**Painting:** Please send one adult sized t-shirt you no longer need which can be used during painting activities.

**Labelling:** Please label **all clothing items** with your child's name, it saves a lot of time and helps your child and teachers keep track of clothing.

**Spare Clothes:** Please provide the school with a spare bag of changing clothes (labelled). This is required at all time to minimise distress at time of toiletry accidents and to have a general change of clothes if clothes get wet. It is always extremely helpful to have a couple of pairs of spare socks in this bag, as they are the clothing item that gets changed

most often. This bag will be kept on your child's assigned clothes hook. Please make sure this is refilled when wet clothes are sent home.

**Places to buy:** We are often asked where the best place is to buy wet gear. Aldi often have sales and their gear is fit for purpose especially when children are growing quickly and outgrowing clothes. If you see a sale, let the Parents Association or the school know, and we can spread the word.

<http://www.puddleducks.ie/> have the more expensive all-in-one suits and

<https://www.muddypuddles.com/> sometimes offer bargain sales.

<https://www.welovefrugi.com/> a range of organic kids clothes

<https://www.polarnopyret.ie/> high quality, keep an eye out for summer sales

- **Snack/Lunch:** Infant children carry their snack in their small backpack. It is important that their lunch is placed in a separate lunchbox which is placed in the cart outside the classroom each morning. Please ensure that any cutlery needed is packed with the snack/lunch.

#### 4.1 PRACTICALITY CHECKLIST:

##### **Infant children arrive to school...**

\*Dressed in their raingear, complete with hats, scarfs, gloves & wellies (season appropriate).

\* With a small waterproof backpack in which they have their snack.

\* With a lunch bag/lunchbox (labelled) containing their lunch. This is to be placed in the cart outside the infant classroom.

##### **Inside the classroom Infant children need...**

\* A bag containing spare clothing (labelled). Including a couple of pairs of socks. This bag should also contain an adult sized t-shirt that children will use whilst painting. This bag will be hung on their personal classroom hook.

\* A pair of indoor shoes/slippers that are cosy with a hard sole.

## 4.2 TOP TIPS & HANDY HINTS FOR DRESSING YOUR CHILD

### Hats

*Most hats will provide warmth, however fleece lined hats offer extra protection for the colder days*

### Layers, Layers, Layers!

*Instead of focusing on heavy fleeces, lighter layers are ideal. Multiple layers make it much easier to find the optimum temperature and keep your child comfortable whatever the weather.*

*Please always roll up all sleeves, before putting on rain jacket.*

### Neck warmer (aka: Buff)

*Great piece of kit for cold weather. Reduces heat loss and can also double up as a hat too!  
(A light material is best, as dries fast)*

### Cotton vs Polyester/Wool

*Cotton absorbs perspiration and does not dry quickly, therefore increasing the chances of your child getting cold in all seasons.*

*Polyester and Wool help to stay both dry and comfortable. Wool provides more warmth, while polyester provides breathability.*

### Rain Jacket

*When looking for a good quality jacket, waterproofing and breathability are the most important factors to consider.*

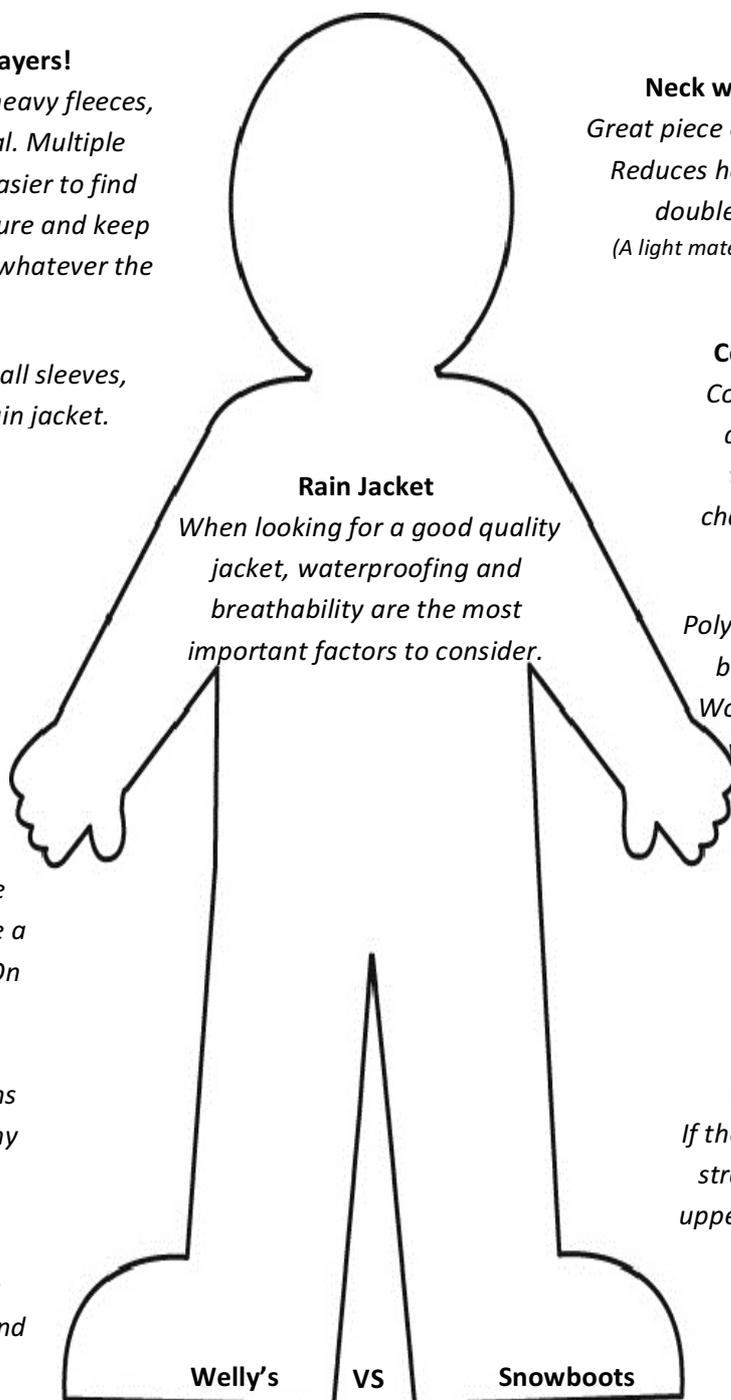
### Trousers

*Typically, waterproof trousers do not provide much warmth. Therefore a base layer is essential. On the colder days an additional layer is also advisable; however jeans are not acceptable in any weather.*

*Any layers under waterproofs should be tucked into both socks and wellies*

### Rain Trousers

*Waterproofing and breathability are key. If the trousers have dungaree straps, these go outside all upper body layers, apart from the rain jacket.*



*For most weather, welly boots are the best footwear for the forest. However, alone they do not provide much warmth. A thick pair of woolly socks is an ideal addition to avoid your child getting cold. (No cotton!)*

*Snowboots are also good; however some brands lack sufficient waterproofing. Also, boots with Velcro can become difficult when regularly covered in mud.*

## 5 DROP OFF AND COLLECTION POINTS

We are insured to supervise children from 8:50am on school grounds. If any child is arriving before this time, please ensure they are supervised by a parent **at the school gate** until this time.

### 5.1 DROP OFF POINT

**As outlined in Schools Covid-19 Response Plan**

### 5.2 COLLECTION POINT

All children will walk with a teacher to the front gate of the school at the end of each day, where they will go home with their parent/guardian.

We ask that parents are punctual at collection time.

Late arrival is not a reason for driving onto school grounds as there are still children from the other school present at this time.

**Further collection details are outlined in Schools Covid-19 Response Plan**

### 5.3 COLLECTION BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN A PARENT/GUARDIAN

- Children can be collected at the school gate by an adult known to the school, as arranged by parents / guardians.
- However, if for any reason, you are not comfortable with the arrangement, please email the office and collection will be as communicated to school only.
- If an unknown adult is collecting your child, this must be communicated to the office before 12.30pm on the day of collection. For safety reasons, we still ask the adult to make themselves known to the class teacher to ensure the safety of your child.
- Collection arrangements should be made in good time to avoid upset to children and interruptions to school day.

#### 5.4 LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY DEPARTURES

- The official start of the school day is 9.10am. There is a 10-minute grace period from 9.10am to 9.20am as children arrive. Children arriving after 9.20am are marked as late on the roll.
- Roll call in our school takes place at 9.30am. If your child arrives after that time they will remain on the roll as absent in accordance with Circular 0028/2013.

If your child arrives after 9.30 am, we ask you to email the school, so we have accurate records as to which pupils are in our school each day for health and safety reasons.

If you arrive at school to collect your child early, you need let us know in advance (phone, email) so we can minimise disruption to class and the need to sign the register.

## 6 FIRST AID

From time to time minor incidents such as cuts and abrasions etc. will occur. The staff at the school will deal with these by washing the cut, cleaning with an antiseptic and if necessary, applying a plaster.

Please complete the Permission Slip for basic First Aid to be administered to your child. If for any reason you do not want us to treat cuts etc., please state this clearly on the form. You will then be contacted at home or work if your child needs attention.

Each classroom will be supplied with First Aid Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment(PPE) for light incidents, i.e. small cuts and grazes. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, the First Aider will attend whilst wearing appropriate PPE.

### 6.1 ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES

The Board of Management requires that parents inform their child's teacher in writing of any medical condition their child may have. While the Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of pupils when they are engaged in authorised school activities this does not imply a duty upon teachers to personally undertake the administration of medicines. The administration of medicines can be discussed with the class teacher in line with the school's Medical Policy.

## 7 FESTIVALS

The celebration of festivals is an important part of the school year in Steiner Waldorf schools. Just like the flow of activities through the day and the week, our school year follows a dynamic rhythm inspired by the change of nature throughout the seasons. Festivals are the anchor points of the yearly rhythm. Stories, songs and crafts, learned over a few weeks in school, build up the specific atmosphere to a festival. Parents are often invited to share in festival celebrations with their children. It has been proven that parental input into school life helps children to grow in confidence and parents are strongly encouraged to become involved in diverse aspects of school life in order to make their child's schooling a memorable time. If you have some time to spare and can help us to develop the school community at Cuan na Gaillimhe Community National School, please let us know!

Autumn is celebrated with **Michaelmas** on September 29<sup>th</sup>. St. Michael is known as the conqueror of the dragon, the heavenly hero with his starry sword (cosmic iron) who gives strength to people. This festival that usually brings a Harvest Table to the school marks the season when we start turning inward after the long warm days of summer and gather up strength and fortitude to face the colder days and long nights of the winter ahead.

In November we celebrate **Martinmas**. The traditional symbol for the Martinmas festival is the lantern. The lantern is the symbol of our own light which we can shine on a dark world, and in Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS we celebrate the festival with a lantern walk in Barna Woods.

**Christmas**: An ancient festival; celebrated when the sun sends the least power to the earth, we celebrate the light and our human abilities to share with each other through festive activities. We create an **Advent Spiral** which symbolises finding light in the darkness. It is a time when the soul withdraws into the innermost depths to experience within itself the inner spiritual light.

In February, Spring comes to our school with **St. Brigid and Candlemas**. April leads us to **Easter** which derives its name from pre-Christian goddess symbols of rebirth, fertility and spring. The renewal of man's being is celebrated with that of the earth. Ancient symbols of the hare and egg are both known as signs of the return of life after winter's sleep.

In May we celebrate the **May Festival** with a Maypole dance a Fair to celebrate warmth, joy and growth.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June as school draws to a close we have **St. John's Festival** in Rinville Park to celebrate the Midsummer Day: Ancient peoples, watching the sun reach its high point at this time, lit bonfires to encourage it to shine and ripen their crops. It is a time when the cosmos brings the spiritual to man - a time when the spiritual, which animates and weaves through everything in nature, is revealed.

## 8 HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

Steiner education is based on the belief that food plays a pivotal role in our physical, mental and spiritual development and wellbeing. It is believed that the centrality of nutritious food should remain a constant for the children in the school and continue throughout their primary education. Therefore, families are encouraged to provide nutritious food for their child(ren) every day.

Lunch is an important meal for school going children. It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage).

A suggested healthy lunch box includes a variety of foods from the bottom four layers of the food pyramid, see below. It is encouraged that the food provided to the children at the school be freshly prepared, healthy, balanced, and organic where possible. We encourage families to source locally produced food if they can.

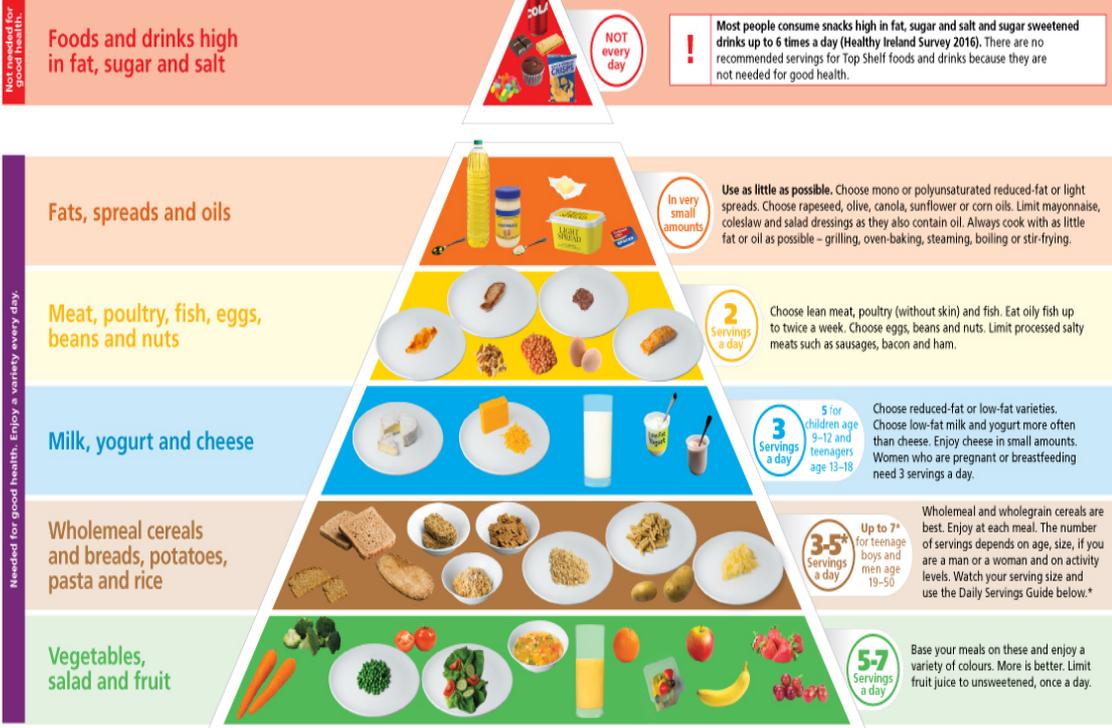
Healthy choices of drink include water and unsweetened natural juice. Children should be encouraged to use re-useable containers for safety and litter reasons.

Please see The Food Pyramid on the next page.

The full policy is available on is available of the schools website:  
<http://www.cuannagailimhecns.ie/>

# The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over



\*Daily Servings Guide – wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

Active	Child (5-12)	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Adult (51+)	Inactive	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Adult (51+)
	3-4	4	4-5	3-4		3	3-4	3
	3-5	5-7	5-7	4-5		4-5	4-6	4

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active.

Average daily calorie needs for all foods and drinks for adults			
	Active 2000kcal	Inactive 1800kcal	
	Active 2500kcal	Inactive 2000kcal	

Serving size guide

- Cereals, cooked rice and pasta, and vegetables, salad and fruit**  
Use a 200ml disposable plastic cup to guide serving size.
- Cheese**  
Use two thumbs, width and depth to guide serving size.
- Meat, poultry, fish**  
The palm of the hand, width and depth without fingers and thumb, shows how much you need in a day.
- Reduced-fat spread**  
Portion packs found in cafes can guide the amount you use. One pack should be enough for two slices of bread.
- Oils**  
Use one teaspoon of oil per person when cooking or in salads.

**Get Active!**  
To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (for 150 minutes a week), children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.

**Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best**

Source: Department of Health, December 2016.

Source: [www.safefood.net](http://www.safefood.net)

## 9 PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

If you have a concern relating to your child, you should first speak to your class teacher about your concern. If this is not satisfactory please talk to the School Principal. All appointments can be made through our school secretary using [info@galwaysteinerschool.com](mailto:info@galwaysteinerschool.com). If, after that, you need to take it up further you are welcome to bring your concern to the Board of Management.

A one to one parent teacher meeting is held in the first term when teachers report on the child's progress. A formal written report will be sent at the end of the school year. There will be other occasions throughout the year when parents will be invited to find out more about what the children are learning.

We also welcome as much informal contact as possible. If your child has any difficulties, please let the teacher know immediately. Please respect that class begins and 9.10am and finishes at 2.50pm (1.50pm for infants) and make an appointment to see your child's teacher outside of this time.

The full Parent Teacher Communications policy is available of the schools website:

<http://www.cuannagailimhecns.ie/>

We rely on the active involvement of all families in contributing some time and practical skills to enable the school to function properly. We urge you to fill the parental volunteer policy and return to the school.

## 10 LITTLE THINGS THAT HELP

Here are some small things that are a big help:

- Send in an adult sized t-shirt which help keep our clothes clean during Art
- Ensure your child is dressed appropriately according to the weather.
- Ensure your child has a spare change of clothes in the school at all times. Refill your child's spare clothes bag when their wet clothes go home.
- Children carry their snack in their small backpack. It is important that their lunch is placed in a separate lunchbox which is placed in the cart each morning.
- Pack the cutlery the children need for their snack/lunch
- It is parent's / guardian's responsibility to report absences to the school. Please ensure all absences are reported by phone or email the office (preferred method) ([info@galwaysteinerschool.com](mailto:info@galwaysteinerschool.com)).
- -Like our Facebook page.
- -Arrive at school on time in the morning and at collection times.
- **Label, label, label!** all clothing, bags, lunch boxes and bottles.

## And finally...

We are a new school, and we want to be a great one, so we really encourage you to play an active role in our Parent Teacher Association.

## 11 CONTACT US

Address      An Cimín Mór,  
Cappagh Road,  
Knocknacarra,  
Galway, H91Y38E

Telephone    091 867 387

Email:        [info@galwaysteinerschool.com](mailto:info@galwaysteinerschool.com)

Website      <http://www.cuannagaillimhecns.ie/>

Acting Principal: [deirdre@galwaysteinerschool.com](mailto:deirdre@galwaysteinerschool.com)

DLP            Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection  
[deirdre@galwaysteinerschool.com](mailto:deirdre@galwaysteinerschool.com)

Chairperson of Board of Management: [Devon.goodwin@nuigalway.ie](mailto:Devon.goodwin@nuigalway.ie)

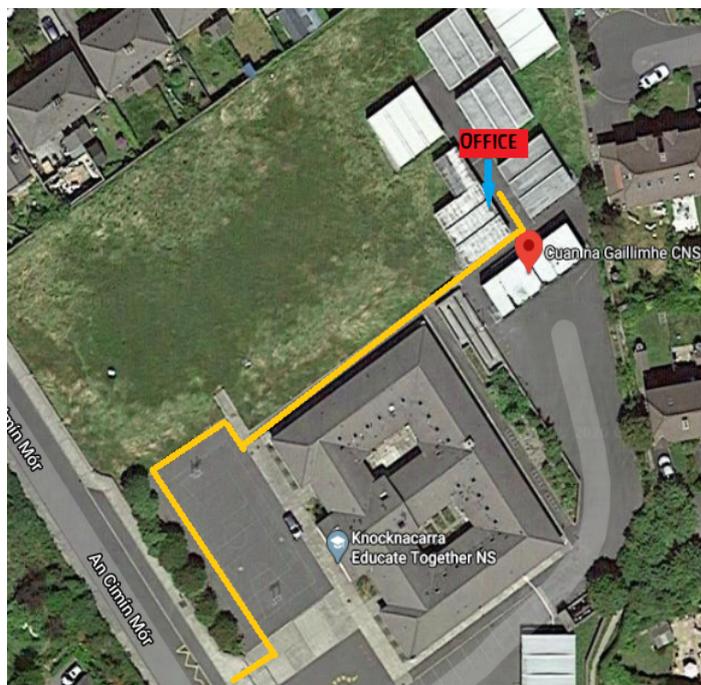
Facebook     <https://www.facebook.com/cuannagaillimhecns/>

## 12 LOCATION AND PARKING

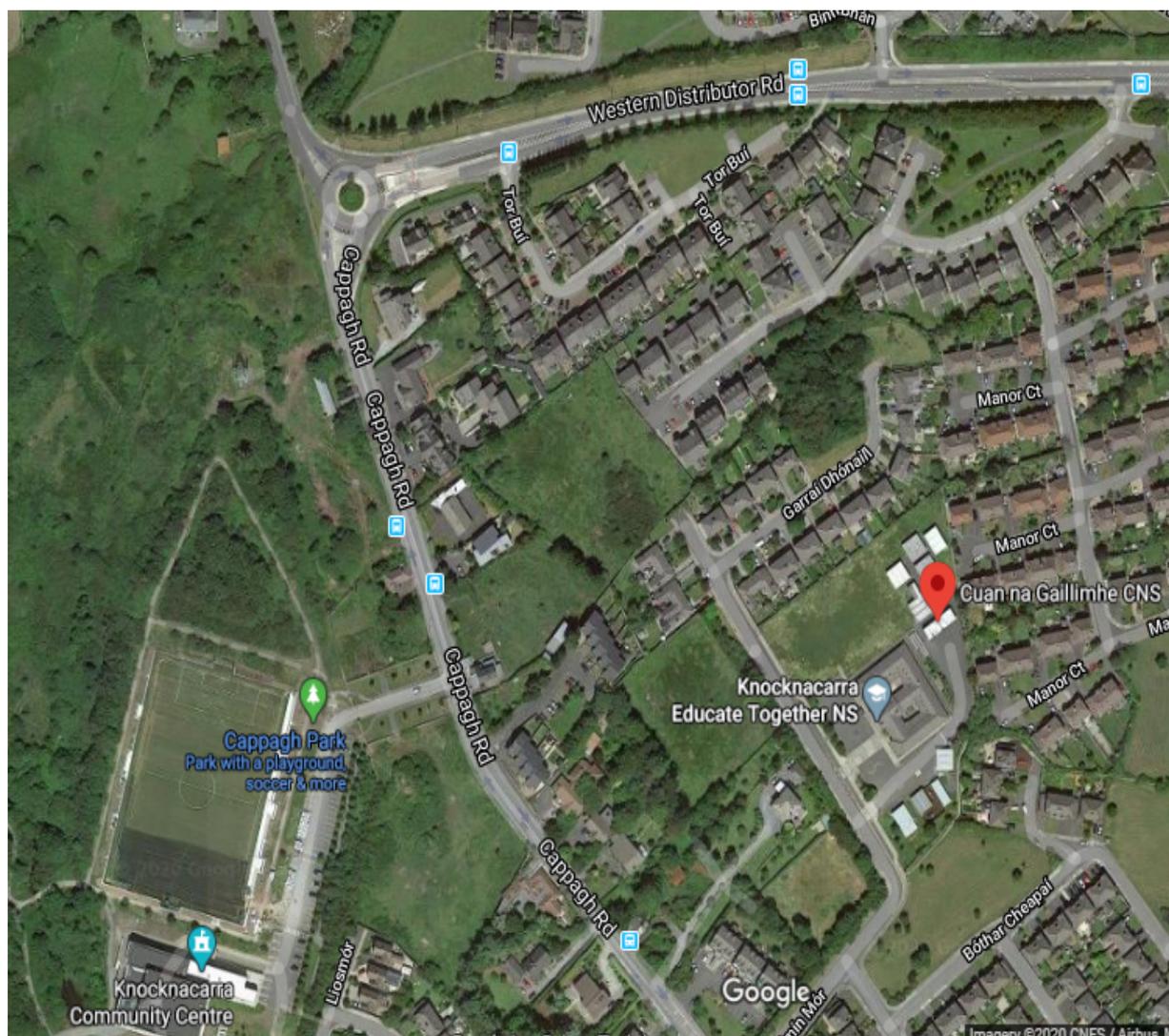
Parking is not available on the school grounds. The area outside the school is reserved for drop off and collection. However, you can park outside the school from 9:15am-1.00pm for periods not exceeding 10 minutes. You can also park outside the school after 3.15pm.

Parking for longer periods during school hours is available just across the road in [Cappagh Park](#).

We strongly encourage those of you living near the school to consider cycling/walking when possible.



Also, in relation to turning of cars, Garrai Dhonaill has 4 bungalows which house people using wheelchair users/mobility aids etc. The residents have asked that the cul de sac remains free from any outside traffic and that their driveways are not used for turning cars. We would appreciate if we can all be mindful of this issue. Thank you for respecting the parking restrictions.



Search 'Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS' on Google Maps. (Postcode: H91Y38E)