

St. Oliver Plunkett N.S.

Newcastle

Athenry



SCHOOL HANDBOOK

for

SEPTEMBER 2024

St. Oliver Plunkett N.S.
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Dear Parents/Guardians,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Management, I extend a very warm welcome to you and your child to St. Oliver Plunkett N.S. Newcastle. We hope that your child will be extremely happy here.

Our children are supported to develop into well balanced and curious learners, being both confident and happy at school. We hope your child will grow into a confident individual, who is sensitive to others, has a desire to be adventurous and committed in their learning, and who is fully equipped for the challenges ahead. Without your support we cannot succeed and we look forward to working with you in the interest of your child's all round learning and personal development.

When you give time to the school you help your child

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We are a sustainable school. We encourage our pupils to care for the school, local and wider community. Our extended and refurbished school building encourages an atmosphere of purpose and belonging.

We recognise that in placing your child in our care, you expect the very best from us and we will strive to ensure that your child flourishes whilst they are with us.

Please come and visit our school if you are considering us as the school for your child. One of the many strengths of the school is that children love coming here. We have a wonderful staff and you can be assured of our full cooperation and commitment at all times.

Should you have any query or concerns at any time please feel free to come and talk to us.

A very warm welcome to you

Claire O' Connor

Principal

Background

This school was built in 1977 (the year Oliver Plunkett was canonised) following the amalgamation of the old Tiaquin and Newcastle schools. The official title of the school is St. Oliver Plunkett N.S. but it is usually referred to locally as Newcastle N.S. It is a co-ed Catholic School catering for children from Junior Infants to Sixth class.

Vision and Mission

OUR VISION is that of a caring, loving Catholic School where all children, whatever their ability, race or creed are cherished for their uniqueness. We seek to give equal opportunity to all children to participate in all school activities in an effort to enable them to reach their full potential - academically, spiritually, physically, socially and emotionally.

We endeavour to achieve this vision by creating a welcoming, caring, courteous, creative environment, supported by the entire school community.

OUR MISSION: We strive to develop independence in our pupils. We strive to attain the highest educational standards through a disciplined and respectful environment. These aspirations will be achieved through the co-operation of all the partners in education, i.e. pupils, teachers, support staff, parents, Parent Association, Board of Management and Parish.

Staff, Board of Management, Parent Association

STAFF

12 full-time teachers - Principal, 8 class teachers, 3 Full time Special Education Teachers (SET), 1 Part time SET

5 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

4 part-time ancillary staff- a secretary, two cleaners and a caretaker

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The BOM has responsibility for the over-all running of the school, including finance, maintenance, staffing and the development of the school plan. The term of this Board is December 2023 - November 2027. The B.O.M. members are:

Bishop's Nominees: Fr. Charlie McDonnell, Stiofán Ó Moráin - Chairperson

Principal (ex-officio): Claire O' Connor - Secretary

Teachers' Nominee: Mary Kearney

Parents' Nominees: Michael Madden, Ann Loughnane

Community Nominees: Rita Keane, Philip O Grady

PARENT ASSOCIATION

As a parent you are an automatic member of the Parent Association. We encourage you to take an active part in the PA. Your ideas and support will be crucial in helping to make the PA a success. During the year the PA run meetings, events and fund raisers. These contribute greatly to the social life of the school. They are also a means of getting to know new people while at the same time making a real contribution to your child's education.

Chairperson - Deirdre Ní Cheallaigh

Secretary - Máiread Hunter

Treasurer - Jacinta Flannery

School Day, First Day/Year

THE SCHOOL DAY:

Junior/Senior Infants:	9.05 a.m. - 1.45 p.m.
1 st to 6 th Class:	9.05 a.m. - 2.45 p.m.
Morning Break:	10.50 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.(J.I - 2nd) 11.05am - 11.15am (3rd - 6th)
Lunch Time:	12.10p.m. - 12.40 p.m. (J.I - 2nd) 12 .45pm - 13.15pm (3rd - 6th)
Secretary's Hours:	9.05a.m. - 1.05 p.m.

THE FIRST DAY

Come to the school on time. On the first day bring your child to the classroom. Give a hug, say good-bye at the gate, and give an assurance that you will collect him/her at the proper time (even though your heart may be breaking...). Most children are busy and happy within minutes of their parents leaving. **For the first week your child will have a short day (9.05 am to 12.00pm).** Children are usually very tired when they start school first, so please help them by making sure they go to bed early. After the 1st week their day will be from 9.05am -1.45 pm. At 1.45pm the children will be escorted to the gate. Please ensure you are on time. Your child's ability to separate from you will be enhanced if they know you will be there on time.

THE FIRST YEAR

Starting school is a milestone in the life of your child. You can help to make this transition easier for your child by providing safe opportunities for him/her to spend time away from you and with other children in order to learn how to share and take turns. Your child will have an opportunity to visit the classroom for a morning at the end of May and will thus be familiar with the school setting. In school we encourage each child to do his/her best through individual, group and whole class activities. All children learn at a different pace. Just as children walk and talk at different stages, they also read and write when they are ready.

Helping your Child

HELP YOUR CHILD TO BE INDEPENDENT by training him/her:

1. To use the toilet, wash and dry hands without help.
2. To put on and take off a coat and do/undo buttons and zips.
3. To open and close school bags, lunch boxes and drink containers.
4. To use a tissue when needed.
5. To recognise his/her own belongings.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD TO GROW:

- Give your child time. Spend time together.
- Talk to your child and encourage him/her.
- Listen attentively to your child.
- Read and enjoy stories together. Talk about the story.
- Repeat Nursery Rhymes.
- Identify colours and shapes.
- Provide paper, crayons, paints for colouring/scribbling.
- Provide jigsaws, Lego, play dough etc.
- Help him/her to cut out using safe scissors.
- Allow sand and water play.
- Have fun together.
- Praise his/her efforts at every opportunity.
- Do as little for your child and as much with your child as possible.

We hope your child's time spent with us will be extremely happy and will help him/her to grow in all that is positive and good.

Curriculum, Homework, Educational Needs

CURRICULAR SUBJECTS

The Primary School Curriculum consists of **6** Curriculum areas. These are further divided into **11** subjects.

1. **Language:** *Gaeilge & English.*
2. **Mathematics:** *Mathematics.*
3. **Social, Environmental & Scientific Education (S.E.S.E):** *History, Geography & Science.*
4. **Arts Education:** *Music, Visual Arts and Drama.*
5. **Physical Education (P.E)**
6. **Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E)**

The Curriculum aims to foster the development of key skills in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, investigation and interaction. It is also the aim of the Curriculum to ensure that children's experience of school will lead them to value and enjoy learning as a life-long process. Functional literacy, numeracy, and the ability to speak clearly and confidently are stressed. Reading and speaking to children at home and joining the local library are very important.

HOMEWORK is assigned Monday to Thursday with children being excused from homework on the weekends provided that their work has been conscientiously and satisfactorily done on the other nights. Senior pupils may be required to do corrections of tests. Suggested timeframe for homework:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| • Junior Infants | 0 - 10 minutes |
| • Senior Infants | 10 - 15 minutes |
| • First | 15 - 20 minutes |
| • Second | 20 - 30 minutes |
| • Third/Fourth | 30 - 40 minutes |
| • Fifth/Sixth | 40 - 60 minutes |

If homework is not done a note to the teacher should be written in the homework journal. 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 are not recommended.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Our philosophy is based on the notion that every child has 'Multiple Intelligences'. In order to develop these and discover their strengths, every child needs a chance to be exposed to 'other' educational experiences apart from the purely academic, i.e. quiz, role play, drama, music, dance, field trips, art, ICT, sports, etc.

* We take every opportunity to invite drama groups, storytellers, poetry/story writers, sports specialists, artists, scientists, musicians and environmental speakers to work with the children.

- * Competitions in Visual Arts and Creative Writing are entered as appropriate.
 - * Inter-Schools Quiz Competitions e.g. Credit Union, Athenry Library, Community Games and Pioneer quizzes.
 - * We organise an annual Book Fair to promote a love of reading among the pupils.
 - * We operate an afterschool Chess and Glee club (singing club)
 - * The strong and proud tradition of hurling, camogie and football in Athenry continues to be nurtured in the school. Teachers coach the boys and girls after school during the fine weather. Hurling, football, soccer and rugby skills are taught as part of the P.E. curriculum during the school day. The emphasis in coaching sessions is on enjoyment and developing skills and teamwork. Our hope is that, through sport, we can influence and direct children towards healthy pastimes and instil in them a pride in the parish.
 - * Children go on at least one educational outing every year with the permission of the Board of Management. Each class teacher organises their own outings.
 - * The pupils may be brought to a performance and/or workshop during the Baboró Children's International Arts Festival in Galway in October and to musicals in the local secondary schools before Christmas.
 - * Children participate in the Write- a-Book project organised by Galway Education Centre
 - * Children attend 'The Youth Academy' at NUIG
 - * Children are elected members on committees such as the Student Council, Green School Committee and Active School Committee.
- After-school activities available locally to the children include basketball, athletics, camogie, hurling, speech & drama, music, Irish dancing, soccer, rugby, football, chess etc.

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

An Educational Psychologist is available to carry out Educational Assessments on children who we believe are not making reasonable progress. Parents are consulted and permission is always sought before this is done. This service, however, may not meet the needs of the school and parents may need to undertake private assessments.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The Special Education Teachers (SETs) aim to ensure that all pupils achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills by the time they complete their primary education. We aim to support pupils experiencing learning difficulties through a team approach involving the pupil, class teacher, special education team, parents and other relevant personnel i.e. psychologist, speech therapists etc. The needs of gifted children are also taken into account. SNA support is available to specified pupils approved by the NCSE. Should your child have Special Education Needs he/she may qualify for extra help with our SETs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER (SET)

The Special Education teachers meet regularly with parents and involve them in their child's Individual Educational Plan, supporting academic, social and emotional development. Some children, for care reasons, require extra support. We have five SNAs who help support the teachers in catering for the needs of these children.

Early identification of learning difficulties is crucial in their remediation. Through teacher assessment, screening tests or standardised test results some children are identified as having difficulties with some elements of the curriculum. Your child may be offered extra help to catch up or work to their full potential. The class teacher and the SET will outline for

you the work they will be doing and show you how you can help your child at home. Some children need on-going learning support and others need it for a short period only. Sometimes the children are withdrawn from class and work with the SET in small groups. More and more the SET works with the children in their own class. Parental consultation and support is a vital aspect of our support programme.

Uniform and Attendance

UNIFORM

Plain navy trousers, navy skirt, royal blue crested sweatshirt, white polo shirt, navy tights or socks

P.E. gear - Plain navy tracksuit pants (no visible logos or stripes), royal blue crested sweatshirt, white polo shirt.

Crested sweatshirt- available at the National School Wear Centre, Liosbaun Estate, Galway or GM Schoolwear Claregalway

Parents are advised to put their child's name on all uniform items to avoid upset and confusion. Tracksuit pants are worn on P.E. days.

PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE

The children are expected to be punctual and to attend school every day. School begins at 9.05 am. Good school attendance is crucial to your child's progress. Children remain the responsibility of their parents/guardians until 9.05 am. The BOM does not provide for supervision outside of school hours. We thank you for your co-operation with this matter. We ask that you are on time picking up your child. A young child's trust is shattered if they are left waiting when every other child has been collected. If you are unable to collect your child on time please make alternative arrangements with an adult known to your child to collect them.

HELPFUL HINTS

*Elasticated waistbands on trousers are easier for small children to manage than buttons and belts.

*Velcro shoes are easier than lace ups.

*Please label all clothing, bags and lunch boxes, as most are similar. Lost property will be displayed in the secretary's office. If not claimed before midterm breaks and holidays it will be given to charity.

*If there is an upset at home which you think may affect your child's progress, mood or behaviour in school please inform your child's teacher or the Principal. This is really helpful for us in understanding and meeting your child's individual needs.

Transport and Safety

SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

Parents of a child wishing to avail of school transport services are required to submit a completed application on-line to www.buseireann.ie

SAFETY UNDERPINS EVERYTHING

In the interests of safety and the fostering of independence children are encouraged to say 'Good-bye' at the gate. They know their classroom and are expected to take responsibility for their own coats, bags and lunch boxes. On frosty morning please remind your child to walk between the bollards in the yard where it is salted.

TRAFFIC

Please don't park on the area designated for the bus at 9am or 2.45pm. The area at the local community pitch, the church car park and the front of the community centre are available for parking, pick-ups and drop-offs.

LEAVING

A note or email to the teacher or a phone call to the secretary is necessary if a child has to leave the school during the day. We would urge you not to collect your child early, as it eats into their learning time. An adult collecting a child early will be required to sign out the child. No child can be released without this. We do this solely in the interest of each child's safety.

ANTI-BULLYING

We strive to create a positive school climate, which focuses on respect for the individual, which encourages trust, caring, consideration and support for others. Pupils are encouraged to report incidents of bullying. Reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant class teacher. Our anti-bullying policy is available on our school website. A copy of our Child Protection Policy is on our website.

CHILD PROTECTION

We are aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Each one of us has a duty to protect children. Teachers are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

The Department of Education and Skills published procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare www.education.ie. The Board of Management has adopted these procedures as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse they are obliged to refer this matter to Claire O' Connor, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for dealing with Child Protection or, in her absence, to Shane O' Looney who is the Deputy DLP.

Health, Hygiene, Medication

LITTER

We encourage the children to take responsibility for their environment and to be litter conscious. All lunch wrappings, empty cartons and uneaten food must be brought home. This helps to reduce waste and keep the school tidy. We work towards heightening in them a sense of respect towards the environment and retaining the "Green School" status held since 2000.

IMMUNISATION AND SCREENING

The HSE provides medical screening for school going children. It provides booster immunisations for childhood diseases to Junior Infant classes. The HSE insists that an adult must accompany the child on the day of immunisations. The HSE will provide dental screening for 6th class pupils and an emergency service for children who have severe pain or have had an accident that affects their teeth.

MEDICATION

It is school policy not to administer any medications to children. Teachers will facilitate Parents/Guardians coming in to give medication to a child during the school day. Children with a long term medical/life threatening condition will be accommodated in order that they may continue with their education. Parents/Guardians must seek permission in writing from the Board before a member of staff may administer medication to a child. If your child has a particular health problem e.g. eyesight, hearing, toilet related problem, allergies, asthma etc. please inform the school and send in up-to-date medication/inhaler to the class teacher. This will be sent home at the end of June.

Disabilities, Illness, Absence

DISABILITIES

If a child has any physical or health problems the Principal should be informed when the child is being enrolled or earlier if possible so that appropriate resources and supports can be made available. Should a problem develop at a later date the Principal or Special Education Teacher should be informed.

ILLNESS / ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

Minor accidents are treated at school. In the event of an accident/head injury or a child becoming ill, every effort will be made to contact the child's parents or the persons you have delegated to take responsibility for your child. This highlights the importance of keeping contact details updated. **If your address, phone number or e-mail changes please notify the school so we can amend our records.**

There is a facility for parents to take out 24 hour insurance to cover various medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident at school or at home during school term and also during the holidays. The Board of Management does not accept responsibility for any medical costs. Details of this scheme are circulated to parents in September.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Please notify the school if your child is diagnosed with an infectious disease, i.e. impetigo, conjunctivitis, swine flu, hand, foot & mouth, chicken pox, measles, mumps, cold sores, Covid 19, etc. Please keep your child at home for the duration of the illness.

HEAD LICE

Please check your child's hair every weekend for head lice and report any findings to the school so that other parents can be alerted. Suitable lotions/shampoos are available in all pharmacies.

ABSENCE AND SICKNESS

Regular attendance is crucial to your child's progress. However, children do, from time to time, get sick. The school is obliged by law to report any child who has missed 20 days or more in one school year. Parents/Guardians are obliged by law to provide a written explanation on their child's absence.

If your child is too sick to go out to the yard he/she is too sick to come to school. Exceptions are made in the case of ongoing or chronic illness. Otherwise children are expected to go out to the yard as it is a vital part of social interaction.

Communication, Complaints

COMMUNICATIONS

Frequent communication is vitally important in developing and nurturing co-operation between home and school. In our school, communication between parents and teachers may take one of the following forms:

- * An annual Parent/Teacher meeting takes place in October
- * End of year reports for each child are sent home in June
- * Notes in the pupil's homework notebook
- * Parents can request a meeting with a teacher by making an appointment. A note to the class teacher requesting such an appointment is a good idea. It is also necessary that the purpose of the visit be stated so that the teacher may undertake whatever preparation is necessary with regard to information and records.
- * Newsletters are emailed regularly to parents and staff
- * Details of school holidays and early closures are communicated in writing
- * Text-a-parent
- * E-mails Teachers e-mails are first name and first letter of surname + @stoliverplunkettns.com e.g. emerf@stoliverplunkettns.com . A list of all teacher emails address can be found on our school website www.stoliverplunkettns.com
- * Zoom calls/meetings
- * Meetings are held in connection with preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation.
- * A meeting is held in January with parents of incoming Junior Infant pupils.
- * Events such as Sports Day, School Mass, Concerts, Carol Services, Prayer Services, Art display days, Ceili, Grandparents Day, Halloween Parade.
- * Our website regularly documents activities www.stoliverplunkettns.com

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Teachers are willing to discuss any problems which may arise from time to time. With mutual respect and goodwill, most problems can be solved readily. Parents are asked to discuss their concerns with the class teacher initially, by making an appointment and, if necessary to proceed further with the complaint, make an appointment to speak with the Principal. (See also the Parental Complaints Procedure on our website for further information)

Finance

MAINTENANCE CONTRIBUTION

The cost of heating, lighting, cleaning and insurance exceeds the capitation grant provided by the Dept of Ed annually. In order to meet the costs the Board of Management appeals to the generosity of our parents for a maintenance contribution annually. This is done by means of a voluntary contribution. This can be paid for the full year in September or in 2 instalments, September and January. You will be notified further in September.

FUND RAISING

We have occasional fund raising drives in order that we may provide your child with the truly "all round" education i.e. school lotto, jumble sales, raffles, bake sales, bag-packing, church gate collections, Christmas cards, etc. We depend on your generosity and support to make these fundraisers a success.

Policies, Emergency Closing

HELPFUL HANDOUTS/POLICIES

Apart from this booklet we have numerous policies dealing with pastoral, administrative and curricular areas. These policies may be viewed at the school on request or on the school website www.stoliverplunkettns.com School newsletters are available on the website also and will be emailed to parents..

EMERGENCY CLOSING

Should an emergency closing be appropriate (e.g. in the event of no heat, snow, pandemic, etc.) the decision to close the school will be taken at the earliest possible time so as to maximise notice to Parents/Guardians and staff. Please ensure the school always has an up-to-date mobile phone number for you so that you can be informed immediately.

Mobile Phones, Cards and Invitations

MOBILE PHONES

Pupils are strictly forbidden to use mobile phones at school or at school organised events. Pupils who infringe this rule will have their phone confiscated. The phone may be redeemed from the class teacher by a parent.

CARDS AND INVITATIONS

When organising birthday parties for your children - we ask that you do not give your child invitations to distribute at school as children who are not invited get very upset.

Useful Websites and Links:

Health Service Executive - www.hse.ie

National Council for Special Education - www.ncse.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment - www.ncca.ie

National Parents Council - www.npc.ie

Tusla - www.tusla.ie

Vetting - www.tuamarchdiocese.org/information-on-e-vetting-and-invitation-forms/

School website - www.stoliverplunkettns.com