



Dear Parent/Guardian,

A very warm welcome to Woodland N.S. We hope that your child will be extremely happy here with us.

Our school is a busy, dynamic, happy and safe place where every child matters. We hope to recognise, develop and celebrate the unique character and abilities of each child. We encourage them to have fun, be creative, be confident and enjoy their learning. We also help them to take pride in their work and value their achievements.

We are blessed to work with a hugely supportive parent body and we very much value the partnership between home and school. Working closely with parents helps us to ensure that your child achieves their full potential. Their holistic development in a child-centred and learner-led environment is our priority and we look forward to working with you in developing your child's all round learning and personal development.

We have a wonderful staff and you can be assured of our commitment and our dedication to our pupils and wider school community.

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

Kind regards

Patricia Slevin  
Principal



## **Welcome to Woodland NS**

Our school is a co-educational Catholic School catering for children from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class under the patronage of the Bishop of Raphoe, Rev. Alan McGuckian. We are an inclusive school and welcome and value children of all faiths and none. Our aim is to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual.

Here in Woodland NS we cater for all the pupils of our school community.

We have nineteen mainstream classes with three small classes at Junior and Senior Infants and then two classes at all other levels.

We also have four classes where we work with pupils who have been diagnosed with Autism and two classes where we work with pupils who have a specific Speech and Language disorder. These classes have smaller numbers of pupils and the support of members of our team of Special Needs Assistants.

We have a specific Sensory Room, a sensory garden and a sensory playground to ensure these pupils have access to the best possible facilities. We also work closely with allied professionals – speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service to ensure our pupils in these classes reach their full potential.

Further information in relation to these classes is available on our website or from the school office.

We are very conscious that we are preparing our children for life and so our mission is to equip them with the academic success and life skills that they will need to be active and participative members of our society.



Our teaching staff is highly committed and dedicated to your pupils and their academic progress. Staff engage in regular Continuing Professional Development and we are aware of latest research and understanding of how children learn. We utilise the most up to date teaching methodologies and pedagogy to ensure high quality teaching and learning. We are committed to the importance of play-based learning in younger classes and use the Aistear Early Learning Framework in our infant classes.

We have a highly committed Special Education Team who work closely with the Deputy Principal, Helen Ginty, to ensure all pupils are supported in their learning. Should you have any concerns about your child's progress please let us know. Similarly, should we have any concerns we will discuss these with you at the earliest possible juncture to ensure we can put appropriate plans and structures in place to support your child.

Cuirimid béim ar ár dteanga duchais. Is teanga fíor binn í an Ghaeilge agus tá sé fíor thabhachtach dúinn go bhfuil grá agus líofacht cainte ag gach duine de na daltaí anseo i Scoil Talamh na Coille.





## **Student Life in Woodland NS**

We are conscious that academic growth is just one area of development for our pupils. We strive to offer our pupils a well-rounded experience of primary school. We have a number of features which help us achieve this goal.

### **Student Council**

Woodland NS is very proud of its Student Council and we believe that the student voice is essential in the running and development of our school. The student council is made up of 10 members of our student body who are elected by secret ballot each year. The student council represents the views and wishes of the student body and liaises with the Board of Management to secure funding for its initiatives.

### **Debating**

Public speaking and the ability to clearly and concisely express one's views are important life skills and these are developed in all classes in our school. However, our debating team in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class further allows pupils to develop these skills. Children learn to address an audience, question others and rebut statements in a competitive forum. Other children develop these skills by chairing these debates or acting as time-keepers for the speakers. We are always so proud of our pupils in this forum as they speak clearly, articulately and passionately about topics of importance to them.

### **Coding**

We begin coding in our junior classes using Bee Bots and this is then built on throughout the school. In the senior classes we use Scratch and Lego We-Do to develop coding skills among our pupils. We also use laptops and ipads in both mainstream and special classes to ensure our pupils are well versed in technology as a tool for learning.



## **Physical Activity**

Every class completes the Physical Education curriculum. Our third classes have the opportunity to go swimming. We play a number of sports in school ranging from Gaelic to Soccer, Camogie to Basketball, Rugby to Athletics and Hurling to Cross-country running. These are really important in ensuring the physical well-being of our pupils as well as building up teamwork skills and developing friendships and interests outside school. We are fortunate to have significant expertise among our staff and access to a number of coaches from local organisations. We are also fortunate as we have a large playing field, a running track and a sensory playground for the development of core strength and balance.

## **Creative Arts**

Each class completes a curriculum in Music, Visual Arts and Drama. These three subject areas provide for the development of creativity which is a critical skill for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

## **Wellbeing**

We place a lot of emphasis on the wellbeing of our school community. Our Wellbeing Team is made up of teachers and SNAs and works to promote wellbeing among students and staff. We develop five skills of wellbeing each year. We have a wellbeing tree where pupils can attach leaves they win for exhibiting the wellbeing skills.





## **Parental Involvement**

We are very fortunate here in Woodland NS to work with an exceptionally supportive and committed parent body. Working together ensures that your children, our pupils, have the very best educational experience possible during their eight years in Woodlands.

## **Board of Management**

The school is run by a Board of Management, which is made up of eight people: two Parent nominees, two Community nominees, two members of the teaching staff and two Patron's nominees.

The names of current Board are available on our website or through the school office. The Board of Management has a four year term.

## **Parents Association**

As a parent/guardian you are an automatic member of our Parents Association. The Parents Association is run by a hard-working committee of parents who are dedicated to improving the school experience of all our pupils. Their names are available on the school website or from the school office.

Your ideas and support will be crucial in helping to make the Parents Association a success. From time to time during the year the Parents Association run meetings, talks, events, after-school activities 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 of making a real contribution to your child's education.

Remember: you **are** the association so please do get involved.



## The School Day

The school opens at 9.20am for all students and finishes at 2.00pm for Junior/Senior Infants and 3.00pm all other pupils.

The children are expected to be punctual and to attend school everyday. Arriving late causes distractions and disruptions. Good school attendance is crucial to your child's progress. Persistent late arrival will result in parents being contacted by the principal.

It should be noted that the **school accepts no responsibility for children in the school grounds before 9.00 a.m.**

We ask that you are on time picking up your child daily. Infant Teachers have other duties to perform and small children's trust is shattered if they are left waiting when every other child has been collected.

Junior Infants may be accompanied to the classroom door by a parent/guardian for the first three days. After this time the children are expected to line up outside – your child's teacher will show them where to go. Children arriving after 9.30am must call into the office and inform the secretary of their arrival.

A signed, written consent is necessary if a child has to leave the school during the day. Parents must go to the office and sign the register when collecting their child/children. If someone other than a parent/guardian is collecting your child/children please ensure that the school has been informed in advance either by note or phone-call of your consent. **Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are not permitted** to go to the classroom so please call to the secretary's office when you are collecting your child/children. If there is any change to the normal arrangements for collection, parents must let their child's teacher know in writing.



If your child becomes ill in school parents will be contacted immediately. For this reason it is very important that the office has your current phone number as well as an alternative number should you be unreachable.

*If you change address or phone number please inform us.*

When a child has been absent from school a note must be sent into the class teacher with reason for absence. In accordance with the **Educational Welfare Act** the school has a duty to report any child who has missed **20 days** or more in one academic year. **The Principal** has no discretion in this.

**Parents/Guardians are now obliged by law to provide a written explanation of their child's absence (verbal explanation is not sufficient). This can be completed on Aladdin Connect.**

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

In the event of a serious illness/accident, an ambulance will be called and the child will be brought to hospital.



## Starting school

Starting school is a milestone in the life of the child. It is often a time of stress and anxiety for parents. Parents however, can do much to reduce such anxiety – both for themselves and their child. The following points will be of help to you, your child and the staff.

### **Preparation for the First Day:**

- All items of clothing should be labelled clearly with your child's name
- Teach your child before he/she comes to school to:
  1. To use the toilet, wash and dry hands without help.
  2. To put on, take off and hang up his/her coat and do and undo buttons and zips.
  3. To open and close schoolbags, lunch boxes and drink containers.
  4. To tidy up after him/herself.
  5. To use a tissue/handkerchief when needed.
  6. To put in/take out books from school bag and to open and close school bags
  7. To recognise his/her own belongings.
  8. To open and close his/her lunchbox and drink.
- Read stories to your child about school
- Speak about school in a positive manner to your child.
- Ensure child's schoolbag is big enough to hold an A4 sized book/folder.

On the first day, come to the school on time on the day. Give a hug, say good-bye and give an assurance that you will collect him/her at the proper time. **Then leave!** Almost all children are busy and happy within minutes of their parents leaving. **For the first few weeks your child will have a short day from 9.20am to 12.15pm. School will inform you when your child will remain to 2.00pm.**

At 2.00 p.m. the teachers will bring the children out to the appropriate outside door to be collected. Infants travelling by bus will be accompanied to the bus by a teacher. Teachers need to be informed as to how your child is travelling home - by car or by bus. If there is any change to regular arrangements for home-time please send a note to teacher.



## **Health and Hygiene:**

Your child is sharing a room daily with a large number of other children. Close contact with other children is unavoidable, so particular attention should be paid to health and hygiene.

Head lice are a common problem in primary school. As your child shares a classroom and playground with a large number of other children, it is very easy for head lice to spread. Parents should check hair regularly for lice. A discreet word to the teacher or principal will ensure that a note will be sent home to all class pupils for hair to be checked. This helps to stop re-infection. Please notify the school immediately if your child is diagnosed with an infectious disease.

During primary school your child will be screened for vision, hearing and dental problems. Consent forms will be sent home. Immunisation against certain illnesses also takes place during the primary years. Parents will be informed of a date and parental consent must be given for vaccinations to take place. No child will be vaccinated without parental consent.

If your child suffers from allergies, asthma, epilepsy or any other health problem you should inform the principal and class teacher. If your child needs medication on a regular basis, you should write to the Board of Management stating:

- The name of the child, the child's medical condition and the name of the medication
- Whether or not the child is to administer the medication themselves
- If the medication needs any special storage e.g. refrigeration.
- Clear written instructions

You must also **sign an indemnity form**, which is available in the Principals office, and it must be returned to the office with your letter to the Board of Management.



## **Health and Nutrition**

A good diet and plenty of sleep, fresh air and exercise are essential to the growing child. Allow plenty of time in the morning for your child to eat a healthy breakfast and ensure your child has a healthy lunch. The school promotes a healthy eating policy. Crisps, fizzy drinks, popcorn, chocolate etc. are not allowed:

1. Woodland N.S. aims to help all those involved in our school community, children, staff and parents, in developing positive and responsible attitudes to eating and to appreciate the contribution that good food makes to health
2. A healthy lunch box includes a piece of food from each of the first four shelves of the food pyramid.  
**Suggestions include:**  
Bread, rolls, scones, pitta bread, tortillas, pancakes, crackers, crispbread, wheaten or soda bread, plain rice cakes.  
Fillings such as ham, cheese, salad, chicken, tuna or peanut butter.  
Fruit/vegetables such as apples, oranges, grapes, pears, bananas, raisins, raw carrot or raw celery sticks.  
Please avoid chocolate coated foods/chocolate spreads, cheese strings, smoothies and cereal bars.
3. Friday is our treat day and you can include one piece of food from the top shelf of the pyramid.  
**Suggestions include:**  
Bars, biscuit, crisps, sweets, chocolate spread on sandwiches, cakes, buns
4. Fizzy drinks are not allowed. Water, milk or fruit juices are healthy options. Cans and glass bottles are not permitted for safety and litter reasons. Please use plastic bottles which can be washed and reused as our Student Council, with the approval of the Board of Management, has requested a ban on single-use plastic bottles.
5. Foods, which have wrappers are to be kept to a minimum and again, if possible sandwich boxes or reusable plastic sandwich bags should be used. **Any wrappers are to be brought home.**



## **Home School Partnership:**

The staff of Woodland School endeavours to create an open and welcoming atmosphere for parents and would like to encourage their involvement in their children's education.

This will be done in the following ways:

- Having structured parent-teacher meetings annually which are usually held during the first term.
- Keeping parents informed on school matters through newsletters/website/email
- Meeting parents of incoming infants to familiarise them with the school.
- Keeping parents informed of their children's progress through annual school reports.
- Keeping parents aware of day-to-day schoolwork through Aladdin Connect / Homework Folder
- Inviting parents to school activities.
- Meeting individual parents at their request or at the teacher's request following school procedure as outlined below.
- Important messages may also be sent by email and through Aladdin.

### **Procedure for arranging meeting with teachers:**

1. Ring the school secretary to make an appointment with the teacher.  
Give at least 24 hours notice
2. Give the secretary possible dates and times for meeting
3. The secretary will confirm the appointment after consulting with the teacher

Please note that calls from parents will not be put through to the teacher during class time or during break time. Please leave a message with the secretary who will then pass it on to the teacher.

We would ask parents not to approach their child's teacher before or after school or outside of school hours with a view to discussing their child's progress.



## **Religious Education**

Our primary aim in Religious Education is to help the child become aware of God's presence in their lives and respond to His invitation to enter into a personal relationship with Him. The capacity of the child for awe and wonder is fostered, and we try to have an atmosphere in the school which radiates love, truthfulness and trust. We emphasise the dignity of the human person as a child of God called to work with other persons in creating an inclusive community in service of the common good; where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged.

Catholic children will be provided with religious experiences that will help them develop their faith. We help parents prepare their children for the sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, with the support and co-operation of our school chaplain Fr Brian Quinn PP. In addition all children will also learn about the teachings and practices of the great religious traditions of the world with a particular focus on Christianity. The wishes of parents will always be respected in the matter of religious instruction. Parents should contact the principal or deputy principal if they have any queries in this regard.





### **Cursive Writing:**

During your child's first year at school she/he will be learning the formation of individual letters in cursive (joined) style. Don't worry if your child is already forming letters in print as they will have plenty of opportunities to practice in cursive style when they begin school.

### **Reasons for teaching Cursive Writing:**

- Aids left to right movements through each word and across the page.
- Each word is treated as a unit.
- Helps eliminate reversal and inversion of letters.
- Continuity of cursive script helps the flow of movement.
- If cursive writing is taught from the start most children will have mastered the mechanics of writing by the time they want to express their ideas more freely on paper.
- There will be no need to change or retain letter shapes at a later date.

### **Emergency closing:**

The safety of the children is of primary importance at all times. Should an emergency closing be appropriate (e.g. in the event of no heat, snow etc.) the decision to close the school will be taken by the Board of Management at the earliest possible time. Parents will be informed of the decision by text message and by announcement on Highland Radio so as to maximise notice to Parents/Guardians. We would ask therefore that you never drop your child without first satisfying yourself that the school is open

**We ask that you ensure that the school always has an up-to-date and immediate contact number for you.**