



Note to all families: June 2020

School Year 2020/2021

Practical Information

Here you'll find practical information about preparing for the new school year. All of the information below is posted on our website (www.brannoxtowncns.ie) under the parents tab.

1. School Calendar 2020/2021

We look forward to welcoming you to the new school year at Brannoxtown CNS. The 2020/2021 school calendar is available on our website and a copy is included with this mailing. Please note the following dates:

Day and date	School event
Wednesday, 26 th August:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome meetings are held with families of junior infant children. Liz Kavanagh, school secretary, will contact you to arrange a time (15-20 minutes) to visit the school with your child and meet your child's teacher, Múinteoir Dawn.
Thursday, 27 th August:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Junior infant children start school.• Welcome meetings are held with families of new children in 1st to 6th class. Your child's teacher will contact you to arrange a time to meet.
Friday, 28 th August:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All children attend school.

2. School Uniform: Ties and Crests

Our school uniform is navy with a blue shirt and a navy tie with blue stripes. Full details are in the Uniform Policy on our website. **School crests and ties are available for purchase from the school:**

- School tie: €8
- Stand-alone crest: €5 (to be stitched on *by* you)
- Stitched-in crest: €4 (to be stitched in *for* you)

In line with our Uniform Policy, parents can drop-off a child's uniform top (jumper, cardigan or sweatshirt) for the crest to be stitched-in by Cill Dara Crests, Monasterevin, during the summer break. If you wish to avail of this option, please ensure your child's name is clearly marked on the clothing item and placed in a sealed bag labelled with your child's name.

3. General Purpose Fee

The general purpose fee enables us to enrich children's learning with planned visits off-site (locally or further afield), visits by experts to our school and a range of educational resources. We are very appreciative of parents contributing to these costs; we aim to keep the general purpose fee as low as possible by securing additional funds for our school through national grants and funded initiatives. The general purpose fee for our school is:

- €90: for first child
- €80: each for the second and third sibling
- €250: for three or more children in one family



Our school secretary, Liz Kavanagh, will be available to accept and receipt **payment for uniform items and the general purpose** fee on Thursday 25th and Tuesday 30th June from 10am to 1pm. Liz will be allocating timeslots of 15 minutes per family.

Please contact Liz at the school email to arrange a timeslot (brannoxtowncns@kwetb.ie). Payment can be made by cash or cheque. If payment is by cash, we would appreciate if you could have the exact amount.

4. School Booklists

The booklist for each class is available on our website. The booklist includes books, copies and stationery for purchase by parents. Please ensure all of your child's belongings—books, copies, stationery and resources (and items of clothing), are **clearly labelled with his/her name and class**. This is important for us to support children to take-care of their own and others' belongings. You'll see that the list of books for purchase is small. This is because our Book Rental Scheme gives children access to a range of additional resources to support their learning during the year. These include (but are not limited to) reference books, reading schemes, play equipment, maths and science learning resources.

5. Afterschool / Homework Club

We look forward to welcoming staff from Busy Fingers, Corbally, to Brannoxtown CNS to provide an Afterschool / Homework Club four days weekly, Monday to Thursday, from Monday, August 31st. Children availing of the service can bring an additional snack to school after which they will begin any homework and when finished, enjoy a range of games with friends. Children in the Junior Room can avail of the service for up to three hours, from 1:30 to 4:30 (from Monday, 21st September). Children in classes from 1st to 6th can avail of the service for up to two hours, 2:30 to 4:30pm.

The cost of a place at the Club is €7.50 per hour, €13 for two hours and €19.50 for three hours. Fees are payable (one month/week) in advance to Busy Fingers by cheque, cash, standing order or direct debit. For regular users, a deposit of one week's fee is payable upon accepting the position available for your child. Deposits are refunded when the child's time is completed in the Busy Fingers Club. A member of our school staff will remain on-site during the Club. Interested parents can **email your interest (days and hours) for September to Liz by Tuesday, 30th June** at: brannoxtowncns@kwetb.ie with 'Busy Fingers Club' in the email subject line.

6. School Set-Down

For children travelling to school by car, our drop-off and collection point is the school set-down area in Grangemore Manor. The set-down has had a fresh layer of tarmac in the last two weeks. Even so, we ask parents to drive slowly in and out of the set-down and to be **vigilant for children who are alighting from/returning to cars**. During school drop-off and collection times: 8:50am, 1:30pm and 2:30pm, the set-down cannot be used for parking. To do so would block other parents from entering/exiting the set-down. The set-down area was a condition of planning permission for Grangemore Manor, to ensure children's safety on the busy road (R413) in front of the original school. For this reason, the double-gate in front of the original school will remain closed. The pedestrian gate in front of the 1885 schoolhouse will continue to provide pedestrian access to the school.



7. School Schedule

Our school starts at 8:50am and children can be dropped to the school from 8:40am. Children from first class upwards finish school at 2:30pm. In junior infants, children have a gradual increase in their time at school:

Junior Infant Schedule	
1. Thursday 27 th August to Friday 28 th August:	8:50 to 11:00 (Bring snack only)
2. Monday 31 st August to 18 th September:	8:50 to 12:00 (Bring snack & lunch)
3. Monday 21 st September onwards, normal schedule:	8:50 to 1:30 (Bring snack & lunch)

Teaching and Learning Initiatives

As a new school, we are excited to develop a range of initiatives which place children at the heart of the learning process. Here we outline initiatives which staff will be implementing with children during the coming year. We look forward to sharing updates on these initiatives and children's learning with parents as the year progresses.

1. Active School

The Active School Flag (ASF) initiative is a Department of Education and Skills initiative which aims to get more schools, more active, more often. The Active School Flag initiative at Brannoxtown CNS enables children to see that there are many and varied ways to be active throughout the school day and within their local community. It is a whole school process that promotes physical activity in a fun, inclusive way for all. We have enjoyed a very busy school year working towards our flag. We established an Active Schools Committee to lead the initiative. Children on the committee shared information, promoted activities, proposed new ideas and monitored our challenges. Our Playground Leaders helped to devise a schedule of games and activities for our yard and led these activities during yard times. We incorporated Active Homework into our weekly schedule too. We had fantastic participation levels in our Active HOME Week in May; we also celebrated a Virtual Sports Day last week. Our next steps will involve getting our committee, monthly initiatives and playground activities up and running for the new school year and applying for accreditation.

2. Creative School

Creative Schools is an initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme to develop the creative potential of every child. It aims to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children and young people's lives. We were delighted to be a recipient of this award for the 2019/2020 school year. Our overall goal is to integrate creativity and fun into our approach to learning across all curriculum areas at Brannoxtown CNS. So far this year, we had three workshops with our Creative Associate, Helen Flanagan. In the first two workshops, we explored the meaning of Creativity through discussions, play and games. In our third workshop, we generated ideas of how we can make our playground a more creative place. Our last full week, beginning Monday 22nd is Creative Week at Brannoxtown CNS. The aim of the week is to prepare children for the workshops organised for September. Children are designing our willow hut, practising weaving, creating fantasy characters and exploring their own creativity at home. We have an exciting schedule for children this Autumn with two workshops per month for September, October and November.



Month	Workshop
September	Creative Writing with Múinteoir Dawn
	Shadow Puppetry with Helen
October	Mask making with Helen
	Drama and Dance workshop with Múinteoir Dawn
November	Willow Weaving with Beth
	Willow Hut with Beth

3. Green School

Green-Schools is Ireland's leading environmental management and education programme. It supports schools to take environmental issues from the curriculum and apply them to the day-to-day running of their school. At Brannoxtown CNS, we are working towards our first flag for *Litter and Waste*. We formed a Green School Committee in September and this group has been working steadily towards our goal of becoming a Green School. The Green School Committee has written our Green Code, monitored the school's waste and organised litter picking sessions. The Green School Committee has continued regular Green School meetings virtually (using zoom) during the covid-school-closure. The committee has generated some exciting ideas for when we return to school including a Naked Lunch initiative, a Day of Action and a book swap, to get us started!

4. Weaving Well-Being

The Primary School Curriculum has 11 subjects and one of these is Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). As part of our teaching and learning plan for SPHE this past year we began exploring and using the programme, *Weaving Well-Being*. We are excited to implement this positive mental health programme with all children from 2nd to 6th class during the new school year. There are 10 lessons for each class based in Positive Psychology, the science of wellbeing. Weaving Well-Being stems from the idea that a state of wellbeing is not alone the absence of the negative, but the presence of the positive. Using Weaving Well-Being, children learn to weave positivity into their daily lives and to develop **positive habits of heart and mind** through a range of activities. Areas of learning for children include resilience skills, mindfulness and developing self-efficacy through empowering beliefs.

5. Writing Workshop

Our school evaluation and improvement plan for 2020/2021 will focus on an exciting new initiative called Writing Workshop in English. We began introducing the Writing Workshop to children at our school this past year and to develop the expertise and resources to implement it across classes. In Writing Workshop, writing is seen as a set of behaviours which can be taught, learned, discussed and developed. It emphasises the importance of children thinking, inquiring, imagining, creating, communicating and exploring language through writing. It is a process approach to teaching writing; this is because writers themselves are continually planning and revising as they, themselves write. We have two goals for all children in Writing Workshop this year. These focus on **engagement and enjoyment** and children recognising and practising **what good writers do**. We look forward to sharing this initiative with you at our first meeting with parents in September.



School Development

This past year saw two big developments for our school: scheduled morning meetings with parents and our new Board of Management. Children have been actively involved in decision-making at our school and this year we look forward to continuing to engage and consult with children on matters that affect them and setting up our first Student Council.

1. Board of Management

Our school's new Board of Management was convened in December 2019 and four meetings were held to-date, the most recent on June 23rd. The Board has eight members including the principal:

Patron's Nominees:	Ms. Deirdre O' Donovan (Chairperson) Mr. Conor O' Toole
Parent Nominees:	Mr. Robin Ball Ms. Mitzie Day
Community Representatives:	Cllr. Tracey O' Dwyer Mr. Mark Egar
Teacher Nominee: Principal & Secretary to the Board:	Ms. Dawn Heffernan Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick

Six meetings are scheduled with the Board for the coming school year. We look forward to sharing plans for and updates from the Board with parents next year.

2. School Policies

As a new school, all our organisational policies and curriculum plans are also new. These are growing with our school and will reflect our priorities for children and our particular school context. To date, our policies have been developed in collaboration with parents. Children have also contributed, as appropriate. For example, children were very actively involved in developing our Healthy Eating policy this past year with Múinteoir Dawn—discussing, baking, taste-testing and ultimately authoring (with families) our Healthy Eating Recipe Book!

During the covid-school-closure, our school was required to progress certain policies with staff and members of the Board, including parent nominees. For example, in April, we were required to update our Admissions Policy, as were all schools nationally. The policies developed during the covid-school-closure are posted on our website (under the About tab). The date of update/publication is noted for each policy. All our policies are always subject to review, amendment and update. We invite all parents to visit this section of our website and to provide any feedback to us at any time.

3. Regular Meetings with Parents

During the past school year, we met with parents every 4-6 weeks for a cup of tea and a chat before checking-in on school news and planned events. Meetings with parents were also a key forum for us to discuss questions about aspects of school policies and plans.

We look forward to meetings with parents during the coming school year. In line with parents' preferences, our meetings have been held on Wednesday mornings at drop-off time, i.e.,



8:50am. We'll meet as planned at 8:50am on September 23rd and after the meeting we'll invite parents to indicate your preference for a morning or evening meeting going forward.

4. Special Events & Parents Association

Additional meetings with interested parents are held to plan for specific school events and activities at our school, e.g. the Winter Gathering (December) and School Community Bookfair (March/April). We welcome parents' suggestions on educational trips and tours for children of all ages. Last year, parents made a very important contribution to our planned events and suggested daytrips for children and children benefitted greatly. We look forward to supporting parents to lead/coordinate the parents' group as the school evolves. The National Parents Council (NPC), Primary provides support for parents in new schools: www.npc.ie. Member benefits for parents include insurance for parents/parent groups to establish themselves. Any parent who may be interested in this role is welcome to contact the principal for further information and to discuss taking on a coordinating role for parents of the school.

5. Communications

We strive for regular communication with parents. As a Green School, we communicate with parents mainly via text and email, using Aladdin, the school's data management system. The following are the ways we share the story of our school's development with parents and with the public:

- **School Facebook and Twitter**, @BrannoxtownCNS: You'll find updates on children's learning adventures on Facebook each Friday.
- **School Website**, www.brannoxtowncns.ie : Messages are posted to the *Notice Board* on the school homepage. The parents section contains all the information included in this note.
- **Half-term Newsletters**: Children design and produce a school newsletter every half-term (approximately six weeks) and these are published on our website in the *News* tab.
- **Contribution to local media**: We are regular contributors to the Bridge magazine, a monthly publication to share news in the Kilcullen area.
- **Class Dojo** (app and website): During the covid-school-closure, we communicated with parents about their children's learning mainly via messages on Class Dojo.
- **Zoom**: To stay connected with one another during the covid-school-closure, we've used zoom sessions for each class and for special initiatives such as transition to second level, green schools, pilates, etc. Our final zoom session on Monday, June 29th is a whole-school assembly to celebrate our completion of the school year and to honour our graduating children.
- **Videos**: To compensate for not being able to welcome new children to our school during our planned Welcome Day in June, we've created two videos which are posted to our website. Múinteoir Dawn's video introduces new families to the Junior Room. A second video by the principal welcomes families to the school and shares some snapshots from our learning adventures so far.