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Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to welcome you to Douglas Rochestown Educate Together National School. I hope that you find this booklet useful as you prepare to send your child to our school. This is a very exciting time for your child and your family and I am sure that you have a number of questions! This booklet is intended to provide you with an introduction to all aspects of school life.

As a staff, we hope to get to know you, our parents, as well as we get to know your children. All of us involved in the school intend to work very closely with you, our new parent body, over these first exciting years of our school. Together we hope to develop a warm, friendly and inclusive atmosphere and a vibrant school community with the joint aim of providing the best possible education for all the children in the school.

A high level of parental involvement is a feature of our school. I encourage you as a parent to become involved in the life of the school. I know that once you become involved here, you will realise the value of this for yourself, your child and our school. Be assured that you will always be welcome.

Dr. Alan Sheehan

Principal

School Awards:

2013-14: Digital School of Distinction

2014-15: First Green Flag; Plaque of Excellence in Science & Maths

2015-16: Plaque of Excellence in Science & Maths

2016-17: First Active Flag; Second Green Flag; Plaque of Excellence in Science & Maths

2017-18: Plaque of Excellence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)

2018-2019: Third Green Flag

2020-21: National winners of ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist; Bronze Rights Respecting School Award; Second Active Flag; Plaque of Excellence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)

2021-22: Silver Rights Respecting School Award

2022-2023 – Gold Rights Respecting School Award



School Day



Our school year begins on **Wednesday, 28th August 2024.** Please ensure that your child is punctual. Children miss out on essential social elements of the school day if they are late.

The Junior Infant day is reduced for the first few weeks so that the pupils have time to adjust. Further details to be confirmed.



The School Year 2024/2025

The school year is standardised for all national schools. This means that schools take the same holidays at winter break and at spring break, as well as public holidays. Schools have some flexibility however at mid-term breaks.

There are three terms in the school year. This coming year they are:

Term 1: August 28th – December 20th

Term 2: January 6th – April 11th

Term 3: April 28th – June 20th

A detailed calendar has been provided to you.

What is an Educate Together school?

Educate Together is a national organisation of the Educate Together equality based schools in the Republic of Ireland. There are nearly 100 Educate Together primary schools in the country and this number is growing. There are also 21 Educate Together secondary schools, including Cork Educate Together Secondary School.



Educate Together primary schools are National Schools. We are governed by the *Rules of National Schools* and by the Department of Education and Skills. We teach the *Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999)*. The schools are fully recognised by the Department of Education and Skills. What makes our schools special is our ethos and core principles.

Ethos and Core principles

Rochestown Educate Together National School is founded on four core principles:

1. **Equality-Based** - children of all creeds and none have equal rights of access, and the social, religious and cultural background of each child is equally respected.
2. **Co-educational** - the school is open to boys and girls on an equal basis. Every effort will be made to ensure that girls and boys are actively included.
3. **Child-centred** - the school aims to establish an environment which encourages, nurtures and facilitates each child so that they will explore their full range of abilities and work towards realising their highest potential.
4. **Democratic** - the school is run by a Board of Management. Children are encouraged to become involved in school structures through their representatives on the Student Council. Our inaugural Parents' Association was established in 2014. The officers are elected every year at the Parents' Association AGM.

The Curriculum



The curriculum of Rochestown Educate Together National School is the same as all National Schools in the Republic of Ireland, and is laid down by the Department of Education and Skills.

Rochestown Educate Together National School aims to create a warm and stimulating environment so that each child may work towards realising his/her highest potential.

The aims of the *Revised Primary School Curriculum* are:

- to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual
- to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

The subjects are separated into seven curricular areas: Languages, Mathematics, Social Environmental and Science Education (SESE), Arts Education, Physical Education (PE), Social Personal Health Education, and Ethical or Religious Education. These areas contain the following subjects:

<i>Languages</i>	English and Irish (Gaeilge)
<i>Mathematics</i>	Mathematics
<i>SESE</i>	History, Geography, Science
<i>Arts Education</i>	Drama, Music, Visual Arts
<i>PE</i>	PE
<i>SPHE</i>	SPHE
<i>Ethical or Religious Education</i>	In Educate Together schools we teach the <i>Learn Together</i> programme

Ethical Education

We provide a programme of ethical education called *Learn Together*. It has four strands: 1) Moral and Spiritual; 2) Equality and Justice; 3) Belief Systems; and 4) Ethics and the Environment. We look at the similarities and the differences between religions. We also provide ethical education programmes based on morality, human rights and responsibilities, and good citizenship.

We do not prepare children for sacraments or religious events but we are committed to making school facilities available to parents who wish to organise doctrinal or religious instruction to their children outside of school hours.



If English is not your child's first language, please note that we encourage children to speak English or Irish at school. Total immersion in a language is the easiest way for children to become fluent and this will enable them to learn better in our school. However, we encourage parents to use their native language at home as this is also important for the child's development and acquisition of languages.

Support Teaching

Support Teaching is provided to children who have been assessed by a psychologist and granted specific support. These include: children who have been assessed as having hearing difficulties, speech and language difficulties, autism, etc. The Support Teacher will work in and out of class with the child.

Support Teaching is also provided to all pupils in the form of in-class support. When the Support Teacher is in the class, the pupil-teacher ratio is dramatically reduced. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio has huge positive effects on the children's learning. Pupils who are experiencing difficulty in a specific area may also receive extra

support in the form of withdrawal. Withdrawal usually takes place in small groups and in consultation with the parents.

Special Educational Needs

We welcome all children into our school. In relation to applications for the enrolment of children with special educational needs, we do request a copy of the child's medical and/or psychological report once a place has been accepted. Where such a report is not available, we request that the child be assessed immediately. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational needs of the child and to access the support services required. Following the report, the Board of Management assesses how the school could meet the needs specified in the report.

If you notice that your child is struggling with any aspect of schooling, let us know. Likewise, we will inform you if we have any concerns regarding your child's educational, physical or emotional development. If this occurs, please do not panic. It's better to find out concerns at an early stage to provide support.

Assessment of Needs



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

The HSE provides a team assessment for free for children of 5 years and under. This may alleviate any concerns that you have and also will help us support your child. Please contact your local Health Centre for further information.

Homework

Homework given to Junior Infants will be minimal. Homework should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Try and encourage your child to complete their homework when they come home from school, as they are still in school mode. Leaving homework until late means that your child may be tired and may learn to resent it.



Uniform

We have no school uniform in Rochestown Educate Together National School but would recommend that your child wears comfortable clothing for safe and free movement. We have a school tracksuit, which is optional. Please contact 4orm (www.4orm.ie) for further information. Minimal jewellery such as a watch or stud earrings are permitted. Other items such as bracelets and drop earrings can cause the child injury, or distress when lost or broken.

We ask that you teach your child to take off/on his/her coat and how to open and close zips, buttons, buckles and laces. Zips are preferable to buttons and elasticised clothing is ideal. Velcro shoes are preferable to laces for young children. Label all coats/jackets/jumpers!

Trolley bags are dangerous and are not permitted in our school.

School Management Structure

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) provides a percentage of funding and pays teachers' salaries. The DES Inspectors monitor the implementation of the curriculum in the school. National schools are managed by a Board of Management which is set up according to Departmental guidelines. Boards of Management contain eight members:

<i>Patron (Educate Together)</i>	Two nominees, one of which is the chairperson
<i>Teachers</i>	Two nominees, one of which is the principal. The other is elected by staff members
<i>Parents</i>	Two nominees, elected by the parent body
<i>Community</i>	Two nominees

The Board is responsible for the appointment of teachers and of other staff. It is also responsible for ensuring that the finances necessary for running the school are available. It states in the charter of Educate Together schools that all Board decisions are to be made for the best interests of our pupils.

Rochestown Educate Together National School's Board of Management was established in December 2023. Its members are Karen Dukelow-O'Neill (patron nominee & chairperson), Adrian Gibbs (patron nominee), Alan Sheehan (principal & secretary), Áine Fitzpatrick (staff nominee), Baris Canpolet (parent nominee), Car O'Regan (parent nominee and treasurer), Tom Connolly (community nominee) and Martina Luttrell (community nominee). The Board's term of office lasts until November 2027.

Contact Details

It is very important that you keep us up to date with addresses and contact numbers in case of an emergency. Please let us know if you or an emergency contact change your mobile or landline number or email address. **It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of any update in these details.**



Communication

It is important for you as parents, for your child and for us at Rochestown Educate Together to have good communication with each other. If you have any queries, problems or concerns regarding your child please contact your child's teacher to make an appointment to meet him/her.

It is not always possible for a class teacher to meet you 'on the spot'. Our teachers have the educational interests of our pupils at our core and do not wish to lose teaching and learning time. In order for both teacher and parent to get the most out of such a meeting please contact the school in advance so arrangements can be made. Such meeting will usually take place before or after school and will give you the attention and the privacy that you may need.

When making an appointment please indicate to the nature of your concern so that the teacher can be prepared to deal accurately with the issue.

Parent Teacher Meetings

Teachers will hold individual meetings after the December holidays with all parents. Parents and teachers will obviously meet on an informal basis daily.

However, if you have concerns or questions, please talk to us or make an appointment to discuss these at an appropriate time that suits both parties and does not interfere with classroom teaching. We will also send home an end of year report towards the end of the school year.

Home Issues

If there is any issue at home, such as illness, separation or bereavement, it can be helpful to both the child and the teacher to have an awareness of the situation. Parental separation or family bereavement can be traumatic for the child if he/she is not supported. Any information is treated confidentially. Teachers can then support the child at school or link the family into suitable services. Teachers approach the issue with sensitivity and with a focus on the well-being of the children.

Admissions and Participation Policy

Rochestown Educate Together National School operate a sibling policy and a first come, first served enrolment policy thereafter and will do so for the 2023-24 school year.

Due to the commencement of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 on 1st February 2020, schools can no longer hold pre-enrolment lists. From the 1st February 2020, no further applications were accepted. **The existing pre-enrolment list for 2023 are still valid and places will be offered to those families on a sibling policy, then first come-first served basis.** Any additional applicants will not be added to these lists. There will be a separate admissions process for these candidates, which will open on 1st October preceding the year in which they are due to start school.

Children must be four years old by June 1st in the year that they are due to start school when the school is oversubscribed. When a child has been offered a place, parents are asked to complete a confirmation form and either accept, reject or defer the place offered. If a response is not received in the time limit given, the child's name will be removed from the pre-enrolment list.

Entry to Junior Infants can be deferred for one year only. Where entry is deferred, the child's name is inserted onto the pre-enrolment list. This does not guarantee an offer of a place for Junior Infants the following year. Deferred names are placed on the pre-enrolment list according to original enrolment date.

We have adopted a sibling policy.

Offers of places will continue until the maximum number that is permitted and has been decided on is reached.



Digital Images

Our Pupil Information Form includes a section on consent for the use of digital images (photographs & recordings). We would encourage you to read our Data Protection Policy, particularly Appendix 2, to learn about how digital images are used in our school.

Absences

Your child should attend school every day. Schools have an obligation to report absences of twenty days or more to the National Education Welfare Board, now known as Tusla (Child and Family Agency). Please phone or email the school or write a short note to the teacher if your child is absent.



Children should only be collected early if it is absolutely necessary. If your child is ill, please do not send them to school. Take your doctor's advice regarding rashes and infections.

We urge parents not to book holidays or trips abroad during term time. This practice has a very bad effect on the education and well-being of your child in school and is very disruptive of your child's learning.

Tours

Parents are asked for permission when we are going on school tours. However, for local tours, example – going out in the local area, permission is not sought once parents sign the permission slip on the Pupil Information Form. Children are often engaged in active learning and leave the school to support the curricular objectives. We also ask for signed permission for photographs/use of photos of your child for the school website. Photos may be taken when children are on school trips or involved in school activities.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - Conserve

We will be encouraging your child to have an understanding of, and engage in, recycling and conservation. We would ask that lunches are placed in lunchboxes and that you will promote recycling/reusing at home. Any packaging brought in by the pupils will be sent home to be recycled/reused. We also encourage our pupils to be mindful of their energy and water usage. We were awarded our first Green Flag in 2015, our second Green Flag in 2017 and our third Green Flag in 2019.



Parental Involvement

Parents have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children. In line with the principles of democratic education, parents may participate in and make a valuable contribution to the school at every level, including:

- Going forward for election to the Board of Management
- Becoming a member of other committees e.g. Parents' Association
- Fundraising
- Giving time to share a hobby, skill or interest during school hours in association with class teachers and the Principal
- Helping the Principal and Teachers with extracurricular activities, school outings, art, library etc. whenever possible.



- Suggesting and getting involved in interesting projects for the children.

If you wish to become involved in any of the above please make yourself known to the school. The school will compile a Volunteer List where you can identify areas where you wish to help out.

Code of Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour at Rochestown Educate Together National School has as its basic tenet a respect for each child as an individual. It aims to foster a positive atmosphere in which every child can learn, develop and reach his/her full potential. The Code of Behaviour enables teachers and pupils to work in a well organised environment where acceptable patterns of behaviour are followed and where self-discipline, based on tolerance and respect for everyone, is fostered. Bullying is not acceptable in our school.

We like to affirm our pupils. There will be class rules and the children will have an input. If there is an ongoing issue regarding misbehaviour, parents will be informed. The Code of Behaviour and other policies are available on our school website.

Health Matters

Like most other primary schools, Rochestown Educate Together National School is under the administration of the Health Service Executive. Childhood vaccinations and screening tests for sight, hearing and dental problems may be offered to your child whilst attending the school. You will be asked to sign a consent form before any health test or intervention. If your child has a particular problem in any of these areas, they can be referred to the Health Centre for treatment.

Allergies/Administration of Medication

We have a duty to safeguard the health and safety of pupils. However, as a general rule, teachers/staff do not personally undertake the administration of medication (e.g. inhalers, injections, applications of cream). If your child needs medication on a regular basis you may need to make special arrangements for this. Where a teacher

or staff member must become involved the following procedure should be adhered to:

1. The teacher must obtain authorisation from the Board of Management to administer the medication.
2. The Parent(s) should write to the school management requesting permission for the teacher to administer the medication enclosing details of the procedure and indemnifying the teacher for same. This request must be in writing for school records.

The school requires parents to ensure that the staff is made aware in writing of any medical condition suffered by their child. This information should be provided at enrolment or at the development of any medical conditions at a later date. The school should be made aware of the name and address of your family doctor.

As some of our pupils are allergic to nuts we ask that nuts or products containing nuts not be brought to school.

As some of our pupils are allergic to kiwis, we ask that kiwis not be brought to school.

As some of our pupils are allergic to sesame seeds, we ask that products containing sesame seeds not be brought to school.

Where children are suffering from life threatening conditions or allergies, parents should outline clearly in writing, **what should and should not be done** in a particular emergency situation, with particular reference to what may be a risk to the child.

Head lice are unfortunately common in primary schools. Where possible, tie your child's hair back. Check your child's hair weekly. If infected, treat your child and inform the school.

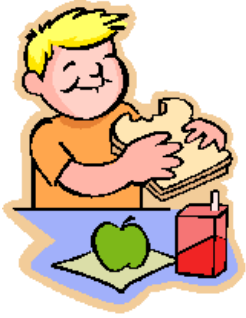
Accidents in School

If an accident happens in school, your child will receive first aid for minor cuts and bruises. If there is anything more serious, you will be contacted by the school.



Lunch

The school day is short and we want your child to receive the best education possible. Diet plays a big part on your child's behaviour and readiness to learn. Treats can be given outside of school time. We promote healthy eating in our school.



An example of a healthy lunch:

Sandwiches/crackers/breadsticks/wraps/rice cakes/fruit/vegetables/cheese/yoghurts.

Water/milk/smoothies

Please ensure that your child's lunchbox is clearly labelled. If your child does not finish their lunch, it will be sent home.

Books

Your child's books, copies and portfolios will be kept in the school until the end of the year. At times books may be sent home for homework. Parents will be invited into the class during the year to see their child's progress. The school will purchase your child's books and they will be covered and labelled for the beginning of the academic year. Other items that your child will need are outlined on the Booklist.

Helping your child in Junior Infants

There are many ways in which you can help your child to settle into and enjoy school life and, in particular, their year in Junior Infants.

- Write their name on their coat, bags, books, lunch boxes, flasks, clothing etc.
- Teach your child how to take off and put on his/her coat, and how to open and close zips, buttons, Velcro, buckles and laces.
- Show your child how to use and flush the toilet properly, and how to wash their hands properly.
- Encourage your child to share their toys and to tidy up after playing.

- Choose a lunch box and flask that are easily opened.
- Give some thought to lunches. Peeled oranges for example, are easier for your child to manage. Set yoghurt may help to avoid spills
- Talk with your child about how they are getting on in school. Focus on the positive aspects.
- Read stories with your child. Practise nursery rhymes.
- Do their words and reading when they start to bring them home.
- Encourage good behaviour
- Come to the meetings or workshops arranged by the school for parents.

It's also a good idea to ensure your child is as **independent as possible** – physically, emotionally and socially. For example, if they can remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour, then separation from parents when they start school will not cause any great anxiety. Meeting for play dates with future classmates is also helpful. Such experiences will help your child to feel more secure and self-confident and they will be able to settle into school more easily.

So let's get started!

With every good wish to you and your child for your first year in our new Rochestown Educate Together National School, which we will build together into a thriving centre of learning for life.