



2021 First Year Parents' Information Evening

St. Mary's CBS Portlaoise

10th February 2021

7.00 pm

On ZOOM

From Each His Best



An Edmund Rice School

**Last
November you
received an
Info Pack with
these inside:**

- **Subject Choice Form**
- **Book Rental Information**
- **Unique School App Information**
- **Data Protection Statement**
- **Parental Permission Form for your son to be assessed for learning support in numeracy/literacy etc.**
- **ICT / Social Media Acceptable Usage Policy**
- **The Homework Policy**
- **Assessment Policy**
- **Voluntary Contribution Form**

School Hours

Mon, Tues, Wed & Thurs:

8.55 am to 1.15 pm

1.55 pm to 4.00 pm

Friday:

8.55 am to 1.15 pm

All our classes are one hour

All students must stay on school premises during lunch

Students MAY EITHER bring their own lunch or buy lunch from Rafters – dependent on the Covid situation in September

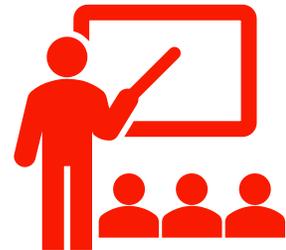
Rafters Menu on school app each week FYI

Activities are organised for students

by members of Meitheal, Treoiri

and our Students' Council.

Other lunch time clubs are held as well.



School Uniform:

- V-neck black pullover with school crest (SHAWS)
- Mid-grey shirt
- School Tie (SHAWS)
- Plain grey trousers (not cord or canvas) (SHAWS)
- Black shoes or boots (with black soles only)
- No black runners
- Black School Jacket– Compulsory from this year available only from Shaws
- No body piercing jewellery
- Natural coloured hair appropriate for school.
- SHAWS Savings Plan is available. Ask in Shaws Uniform Department when they reopen.

School Jackets:

- The black school jacket is compulsory for all students when they go on school business/tours/trips etc.
- This is only available from SHAWS – sample sizes are available for fitting when you bring your son in.
- Each student's name is printed on the sleeve for easy identification
- Orders will be taken in SHAWS from May. The orders are sent away in a group and return about a month later. Please order as early as possible.
- Cost is €60, including the embroidered name.

Subject Information

Religion

- **RE is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school.**
- **In compliance with ERST guidelines and reflecting our school's inclusive nature, all students are expected to participate in RE lessons.**
- **RE is not a non-exam subject here, so the non-instructional nature of the lessons, the emphasis on studying world religions, the opportunities for inter-faith discussion and the reflection on philosophical and moral questions should engage ALL students in the lessons.**

Religion (contd)

- **Parents of students, and students over 18, who still wish to opt out of RE lessons will be invited to meet with a member of management and the head of the RE Department, to discuss their concerns and options.**
- **The Education Act mandates all schools to promote “the spiritual and moral development” of EACH child in their care so students who opt out of RE lessons will NOT be offered extra tuition or study periods. Instead, appropriate texts or novels with moral or philosophical content may be read/reviewed.**

Your Son's Subject Choices

- All enrolled 1st years submitted their subject option choices last November.
- We will not be able to offer Music because of the low interest. Those who chose it, got their next choice.
- If your son wishes to change his mind, please inform us as soon as possible by ringing the office, telling the secretary which subject they wish to drop and what they wish to take up.
- You will be informed in April of the subjects your son has been allocated.
- This will enable you to order from the Wriggle store, as you need to know the subjects for the texts.
- If doing Book Rental, this information is also relevant.
- Students will be allowed to change an option subject up to the Halloween Mid-term break (space permitting) but not any later, for obvious reasons.

Irish Exemptions

▶ Does your son have an exemption from Irish or modern languages? This is a written document you should have received from his primary school when he was granted the exemption. If you do not have this, he must study Irish for his Junior/Leaving Cert unless there is a reason he should qualify:

An **EXEMPTION** is granted when:

- ▶ A student fails to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in his mother tongue.
- ▶ If he has a specific learning disability (such as dyslexia).
- ▶ A student who has lived outside of Ireland until 12 years of age will also qualify.
- ▶ The eligibility grounds for the exemption from the study of Irish are set out in DES Circular 0053/2019 - there have been recent changes in the granting of exemptions.
- ▶ We have a school policy which is available on both our school Website and through our school App under School/School Code & Policies titled: '*Granting of an Irish Exemption Policy*' which will inform you further.
- ▶ Please do not presume your son has an exemption

Our Care of your Son

Our School Care Team:

- **First Year - Year Head – Mr Adrian White**
- **Learning Support Coordinator – Ms Lynch**
- **Career Guidance / Counsellors –
Ms M McEntee / Ms C Brennan /
Ms C Phelan**
- **Class Tutors – To be decided**

What do our Care Team do?

- We have 2 Care Team weekly meetings – a Junior and a Senior Meeting
- Anyone who is relevant to the year groups is present, so that information can be shared both
 - Constructively
 - Confidentially
- Sometimes
 - a plan needs to be put in place for a student(s)
 - sometimes we all need to be kept in the know (with information from the home/observations/etc.)
 - Sometimes all is good, and we share that too.
- Who attends?
 - Year Head
 - SEN Coordinator
 - Behaviour Support Team member
 - One of the Guidance Counsellors
 - At least 1 of the 3 – Principal / DP / DP
 - Home School Liaison Coordinator

Our Meitheal Leaders

- These are ten 6th year students who applied to be Meitheal Leaders, were interviewed and selected when in 5th year to be part of this Diocesan led programme in schools in the Kildare & Leighlin Diocese.
- They take part in a 1 week training session during June for their role of mentoring - specifically 1st years - in their transition from primary to secondary.
- What do they bring to the role?
 - They are peers of your son, a few years older, but well placed to understand the younger students.
 - They have eyes and ears in places where teachers and adults do not.
 - As schools become larger, this is a level of pastoral care to keep the 'personal touch'.
 - These young men have been trained to be perceptive, intervene in ways no adult can do without appearing heavy handed, be discreet and know just when to liaise with us, the adults.
 - In short, they make your son's first few weeks here a more pleasant experience.
 - They are amazing young men, and we are very proud of them.

Special Educational Needs and Learning Support

**If your son
has....**

- ▶ Received any additional support in primary school
- ▶ Been granted an Irish exemption for a specific learning disability
- ▶ Had a psychological assessment
- ▶ Had access to an SNA
- ▶ Been approved for a laptop or
- ▶ Had a diagnosis of dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD or any other learning difficulty
- ▶ Been diagnosed with Autism or Aspergers
- ▶ Had a visual, hearing or other sensory impairment which impacts on their learning....

Parents will be able to consult with the SEN Department

- **If so, please ensure that ALL relevant documentation, including the Post-Primary transfer document, in relation to your son's needs, are sent to our SEN Department as soon as possible.**
- **Normally, each Feb/March the SEN Dept meet with parents who have ticked 'Yes' to one of the items on the previous slide.**
- **This meeting allows you to explain and the SEN teachers to ask you relevant questions to inform them as to the type of support your son may need in September.**
- **This information, plus the results of the CAT4 test and other assessments, the report from his primary school and his Education Passport all inform us**
- **Again, we will wait to see will meetings be possible.**
- **They may be on Zoom. We will keep you informed.**

**Members of the SEN Team
will visit/contact all feeder
primary schools during
April & May 2020**

**They will speak with the 6th class
teachers to gather relevant
information about your son's
learning needs**

**Primary
school visits
by our SEN
Team**

**In early June, the students who
will receive learning support are
invited into the school for a
morning to become familiar with
their new school.**

**Each primary school sends the
Education Passport FOR ALL
STUDENTS during the summer
which helps inform the school**

Our CAT4 Entrance Exam

- **Dependent on Covid Guidelines, we²⁰ hope to run the CAT4 (a 2 hour exam) later in the term.
(April/May/June)**
- **This will be notified to you by text / on our school App.**
- **Times will be allocated, and students must attend at that time in order to maintain social distancing.**

**Cost of these
assessments
done over 1st
& 2nd year**

- A €30 fee is payable to cover the cost of the following assessments over the next 2 years – paid before CAT4.
 - CAT4,
 - GRT (Group Reading Test in 1st & 2nd year)
 - PTM (Progress Test in Maths in 1st & 2nd year)
- This may be paid on the School App.

Our Use of Technology in Education

**Over 65% of school pupils today will end up working in jobs that do not exist yet.
(Ibec, 2018)**

St Mary's CBS and



- In St Mary's CBS, we have been lucky enough to²⁴ have begun the road to digital learning years before the Covid Lockdown hit all schools last March.
- There was a steep learning curve at that time for all, but we can see the huge rewards of that upskilling in this second school closure.
- Most parents realised they needed to have a device (at the very least at home) to enable their sons and daughters to engage in online learning.
- We will present the reason for you to consider purchasing an iPad through Wriggle.

Why use Technology?

- **Science experiments, practical subject demonstrations, etc can be videoed, questions and answers recorded, then reviewed when coming up to exams.**
- **For eg, Revision videos of our Maths classes can be posted to their online 'Microsoft Teams' platform to view when they get home.**
- **Languages can also use their recording ability – students can test themselves when studying for orals, practice their accents, etc.**
- **Google, Microsoft Edge & YouTube offer endless step by step guides and 'how to' videos instantly at their fingertips.**
- **A 1:1 device, such as an iPad, enables students to become independent learners – this is what modern education is working towards with the new strategies, methodologies etc. It is trying to move away from spoon feeding information, rote learning etc.**
- **Obviously, E-books are only a very small % of their potential.**

Since we first introduced iPads we have improved and changed to make it a much better learning experience by...

- Upgrading of WiFi throughout the school.
- Providing Continuous Professional Development to teachers in the area of technology on a regular basis
- Providing training to incoming students
- Creating 'How to' videos to help ease of use for students & parents.
- Introducing the new Screen Time function.
- Teachers using the Classroom Management App
- Introducing the **Wriggle Connect Family** to parents.
- Providing both a print text and an e-book for the iPads, giving your son several options for study.

Technology in St Mary's CBS Portlaoise

We are preparing students for jobs that do not exist, using technologies that have not been invented, to solve problems we don't know yet.'

Amanda Jolliffe, Microsoft IRL, 2019

Covid has taught us that, in future, all sectors of employment and education will conduct their day-to-day business through online technologies. We will not be returning to handouts and photocopied notes, carrying piles of printed matter around with us. That has been changed...utterly.

What will an iPad cost?

The cost of an iPad 32 / 128 GB	€379/€475
A good heavy-duty case	€45
The cost of e-books will depend entirely on the subject options your son picks but generally, they are between	€250 - €290
Wriggle services and support approx.	<u>€120</u>
Total	€834 / €930

Please see both the [Wriggle leaflet](#) and the [Wriggle Connect Family Webinar](#) by clicking on the link found on Slide 34 of this presentation, on our school App, and on the school website.

The Online Store opens in April, date to be decided.

It is important to begin the process early as the Store closes at the end of May/early June and there are late fees after that.

FUND YOUR IPAD/EBOOK



WE CAN HELP YOU WITH A LOAN
OVER A ONE YEAR PERIOD:

€700 LOAN

PAID BACK OVER 52 WEEKS (1 YEAR)
REPAYMENTS OF €13.92 PER WEEK
INTEREST RATE @ 6.5% (6.72% APR)
TOTAL COST OF THE LOAN = €723.35



Portlaoise Credit Union-
contact them

Timeline for getting the iPad

- The Wriggle Store opens **just for the iPad purchase in April** (exact date TBC)
- All students will be informed of their Option subjects in April, by the school, so they will be able to choose their textbooks on the bookseller's website when it opens.
- When purchasing either books or iPads, always use our School's Store Code **02742671** (found also on the leaflet) and find our school's name on the drop-down menu.
- If you are going to avail of the humm by **Flexifi Credit**, find out what your iPad bundle will cost, then you **MUST** apply to them before going to Checkout, get approval first for the € you require, this only takes 24 hours. (See leaflet)
- When you have loan approval, you use the code they give you when you get to the checkout of Wriggle Store. It's quite straight forward.

Timeline for getting iPad (continued)

- There is a **Late Fee of €50 past a certain date when the Wriggle Store closes**– as it takes several weeks to prepare each iPad order. In order to have it for late August, it must be ordered by this ³¹ date in June.
- This year the **printed books are purchased separately** – on the website of the bookseller that Wriggle decide to go with – you will be informed.
- The **iPad will be delivered to your door in July**, if you order before the last day before the late fee kicks in.
- It will be loaded with all the educational Apps which will be needed for your sons in 1st year.
- Parents will be buying the iPad separately from the printed books – this is the first year this is being done – Wriggle organise all of this, not us.

Timeline for getting iPad (continued)

- If you order in July or August, your son will not get delivery³² of the iPad until October. We will make sure he is supplied with printed books if they arrive later than the day he begins.
- We do advise that you invest in the insurance – accidents do happen! And the heavy-duty case is the best insurance of all!
- The advantage of purchasing an iPad from Wriggle means that it can only be used to educational apps – no matter what, Minecraft and Fifa cannot be downloaded! The App store is disabled.
- The iPad is managed by the school management system (JAMf Classroom) and there are several ways you can monitor what is being done by your student.

What do you do when you receive the iPad?

- **Wriggle have provided several ways to train both parents and students by giving open access to short training videos as part of the [Wriggle Connect Family Basic Plan](#) (part of your original Support Plan) See link on slide 34**
- **These will take you through the steps of setting your new iPad up.**
- **All the publishers' apps will be on your iPad already. (Folens, Edco, Mentor, etc.) Through these the individual ebooks are downloaded using a code inside the printed books when you receive them.**
- **All students will be given a new school @portlaoiseCBS.com email address which will give you full access to the Microsoft Office 365 Suite of Apps – Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Outlook, Teams, and more.**
- **Each student in our school, regardless of whether they purchase an iPad or not, will be able to download the Microsoft Office Suite to 5 different devices – handy for other siblings going to college etc.**

Link to Parents
Wriggle Connect
Webinar

<https://vimeo.com/509871675>

Link to Wriggle
Parents' Pack

https://portlaoisecbs-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/p/gbrennan/EY2Mjh16iytAiP73YehMw6sB-mmxvABKjo4iM_lmsOWc0A?e=ci0zwl

- Books initially cost €200 in first year.
- You must purchase your own copies, exam papers, journal, etc. separately.
- For second year : additional texts for Irish, English, languages, Maths and SPHE will be required. This is an additional cost of €100.
- Forms are available tonight in your information pack.
- No applications will be accepted for Book Rental after May 29th. (for current enrolment)
- There are strict rules around the maintenance of rental books and their replacement if damaged or lost. All parents and students must sign the Agreement on receiving their texts.

**Book
rental is
also an
option:**

Next August...

- The lads meet and begin to bond with their Meitheal leaders, who will work with them closely, especially over the first few weeks.
- There will be a busy programme of activities, some sports, mapping, mixing with their classmates, etc.
- It is an ice-breaker, it removes those first day 'butterflies in the stomach' nerves.
- When they go home at the end of the day, they will know a few of their classmates, have received their timetable and worked through their 'map' for the first few days - having found their classrooms by games and taking photographs of the doors etc.
- They will have formed bonds with their class group.
- It removes that 'bewildered' look first years used to wear in their early days!

What happens on Induction Day in late August ?

- You will be invited into a short Information Evening with a Q & A, two evenings before the 1st years begin at 7pm. (or on Zoom)
- This will allow you to find out for sure what is going on for the next week.
- Your son will have had his Induction Day on Tuesday August 24th.
- You will have the opportunity to ask us the questions your son probably asks you when he comes home from that Induction Day!
- You will be home by 8.30pm at the latest.
- It is time well spent.
- If you haven't collected Book Rental books up to then, this is the time to do so.

What happens when school begins...

- Their first day will be Thursday 27th August.
- It will be half days until Monday 6th September.
- They will be closely monitored by our Meitheal leaders
 - At their lockers
 - During break times
 - Meitheal leaders will each have their own 'list' of first year students, so there is a bond starting to grow between the older and younger lads.
 - Over the first few weeks especially, if someone seems not be fitting in, they're by themselves, not looking happy, the leader will pick up on this.
 - Activities are organised during lunch time to help the 1st years become more used to one another, make new friends and have fun as well!

**What to
expect
the first
week...**

Our 1st Year Scholarship

Further information will be available on our
App

Closing Date: **31st March 2021**

St. Mary's CBS 'From Each His Best' Scholarship Award

www.stmaryscbs.ie
Edmund Rice Schools Trust

SCHOLARSHIP

APPLY NOW!

NOW BEING OFFERED TO INCOMING FIRST YEARS FOR THE 2019/2020 ACADEMIC YEAR

- ✓ Scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic ability and exceptional sports skills
- ✓ Application forms available on the School Website and School App
- ✓ Scholarship nominative to be held in _____

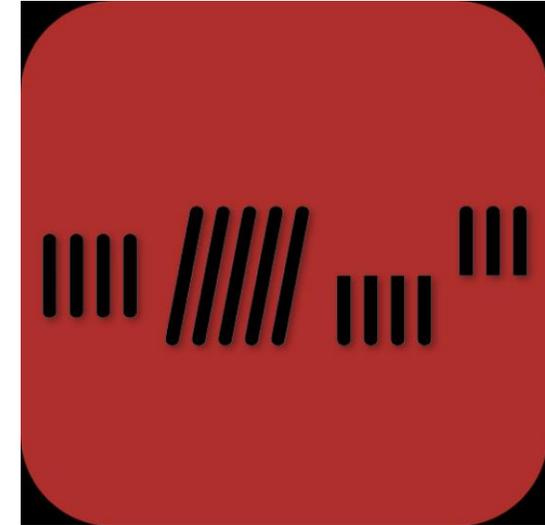
SCHOOL TRANSPORT

For further information about eligibility, cost, where to apply etc., please see the leaflet in your Information Pack tonight.



Communication via our School App

- Our School App has become a core part of our daily communications with parents, students and teachers.
- All parents should download our App from their App store, either Android or Apple.
- Access to VShare, paying school fees, viewing school reports, instant notification of school activities and information, permission slips, photos, letters to parents, the list is endless of the uses it is put to.
- All incoming 1st Year Parents are now registered on the App and can begin to make payments through it, access the school's information and receive notifications .
- Please begin to do so from now on. You will not receive notifications otherwise. It's free.



Q & A