



Conservanda, Dicitur Agri Caelibatus.

# Scoil Mhuire

## Handbook

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## Introduction

Dear Parents,

This handbook is intended as a brief introduction to Scoil Mhuire. A handbook of this size cannot be comprehensive, and answer all points that may arise. Neither can it replace personal contact. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school as we will be pleased to answer questions not covered, and to discuss them with you in greater detail. Scoil Mhuire is an open school, and it is your school. We need and welcome your presence and support. If you need any further information or have any anxieties in the years to come, please come into the school, or contact us immediately. A major factor in the quality of education we can offer your child is the warmth of the relationship between the school and you, the parent. Your help in building this relationship is warmly appreciated.

Finally, may I wish you a long and happy association with the school.

Mise le meas,  
Muiris Ó Faoláin,  
Príomh Óide.

## **Organisational Structure of the School**

1. The Principal and teaching staff of the school are required to be present at 8.50 a.m. Scoil Mhuire opens for the reception of pupils at 8.50 a.m. Children are encouraged to be in their classrooms by 9.00 a.m. in order that formal instruction may commence at the official time without disruption by latecomers. While of course the School grounds will be open to the pupils, the School has no responsibility for children arriving before the official opening time, going home for lunch or remaining in the School after school hours. The school does not undertake responsibility for children coming to school or going home from school. Parents who wish to have their children escorted home should arrange to have them met at the school gate not later than 1.30 p.m. for the Infants and 2.30 p.m. for all other classes. In the case of children traveling by the School bus, the School cannot accept responsibility for escorting them from the bus to the School, or from the school to the bus. On wet days it is particularly important that parents would not approach and block the school doors at class dispersal times, as this makes it very difficult for the teachers to observe which children have / have not been collected. A Junior School Warden scheme commenced in October 1997. The wardens assist children in crossing the road safely at 2.30 p.m.
2. The children of the school are expected to wear:

- a. Navy top / Cardigan with slate grey skirt / pinafore / trousers and optional red tie **OR** a navy tracksuit with white T-shirt / Shirt / Blouse.

Generally, parents favour the use of a school uniform as it is both utilitarian and economic.

3. If a pupil has to leave school early a note is required by the Principal Teacher from the parent, stating that the parent accepts responsibility for the child's safety. If at all possible, pupils should not leave school before 2.30 p.m. as such departures disrupt study and school routing. Consequently, parents who wish to make appointments for children with doctors, dentists and others should do so if possible for times outside of school hours.
4. In the event of a child becoming ill during school hours, the parents of the child will be contacted if the teacher has been provided with the appropriate telephone number. The parents will then be requested to make arrangements to have the child who is ill collected from school. It must be clearly understood that the teaching staff of the school are under no obligation to accompany children who are ill to their homes.
5. During lunchtime, on completion of their meals, all children are directed to vacate the classrooms and go to play in the school playground. Therefore, children who are recovering from illnesses should not be sent to school until they are fully recovered as they will be expected to go to the playground at lunchtime. Post-operation cases, etc., must be individually arranged with the Principal Teacher by the parent. Generally, it

- is felt that if a child is well enough to be at school, he/she is well enough to be at play.
6. In order to ensure that there would be an orderly evacuation of the school building in the event of an emergency and in order to maintain a reasonable discipline within the school building at all times, the children of the school will be directed to use a certain door when entering and leaving the premises. It is in the child's interest that parents would insist that children conform to these directions.
  7. Chewing gum is not allowed in the school.

## **Parking**

No parking is allowed in the bus-bay between 8.40 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. and between 2.15 p.m. and 2.45 p.m. Please do not drive into the school grounds to drop off children at school or to collect children after school. In the interest of safety of all the pupils, please co-operate by adhering strictly to the above restrictions. Please co-operate with the parking regulations outside the school for the safety of all the children. Parking is not allowed in the restricted areas indicated by the yellow lines. You are encouraged to make use of the car park adjacent to the church.

## **Starting School**

Sending your child to school for the first time can be a traumatic experience often more so for the parent than for the child. By avoiding a number of pitfalls and by doing some advance preparation the change from pre-school to junior primary school can be a smooth one. You must ask yourself if your child is ready for school. This will depend on his / her maturity rather than age. Many four year olds are well able to cope, while some five year olds struggle to adapt. Make sure they are ready for the more formal aspect of school, the discipline and the length of the school day. Don't adopt the attitude that if it doesn't work this year, you can send them next year. By sending the child when they are ready, you and the child will be able to settle down quickly to the routine of class life.

Most children will be quite excited at the prospect of going to school. They will be delighted by the school uniform, school bag and lunchbox. In school your child will be expected to be somewhat independent. The teacher, even with the best will in the world, cannot be expected to cope with the demands of 30+ Junior Infants.

Therefore:-

1. Ensure that the child is able to go to the toilet and wash her hands.
2. Teach the child to button and unbutton trousers.
3. Don't put dungarees or other awkward trousers on the child.
4. Get the child into the habit of hanging up their own coat at home.
5. Buy them a coat that they will be able to fasten.

6. The school bag should be one that they can easily open and close without help.
7. Shoes should not be of the laced type if they are unable to tie the laces. It is much better to provide shoes that have Velcro fasteners or shoes that they can slip on.
8. Make sure they can eat lunch without help. Give them plastic containers that are unbreakable and easy to open and close.
9. Do not provide the child with lunches that are too big. One sandwich and a drink is sufficient, fruit that has been cut and peeled should only be given.
10. Write their name on all their belongings – coat, hat, shoes, books and schoolbag, lunchbox, drink container, gloves etc.
11. Inform the teacher at the beginning of the school year of any problems that the child may have.

Even when your child is adequately prepared, as above, the first morning in school can present problems. Often it is an emotional time for the parent as “Baby” is suddenly transformed into a school-going child. This emotional upset can easily be transferred to the child, who will then become distressed. They may worry that, you may be lonely without them, as indeed you may. If one parent is unable to face the situation on the first morning, then the other partner should bring the child to school. It is important to get your child off to a good start, so be matter of fact when leaving. Emphasize that you will collect them in a short while.

Settle the child in their place; involve them in play with another child, then leave quickly and without fuss. Don't pretend that you are



waiting outside the room. They may decide to look for you during the day if they think you are there. Once you have left the classroom, don't turn back. Don't look in the window just to see how they are settling in. They may see you and sense that you are worried.

Some children are overawed by the situation and begin to cry. Try to calm them and hand them over to the teacher. Most teachers will tell you that the children usually stop crying after their parents leave. The teacher quickly gets them interested in a game or activity and the problem is solved. Whatever happens, don't bring them home as they will see that crying has worked, and they need never go to school if they cry in the morning.

Having left your child at school, go home and relax. In a few hours, you have to go and collect a very excited child, full of chat about the first day in school. Make sure that you collect them on time. They will become upset if you are not there waiting for them. After a few days when they have settled into the routine of school, both you and the child will wonder what all the fuss was about.

The early years of life are the foundations on which we build and if these are shaky then future development will not be secure or stable. From the moment of birth children are learning. They learn faster and with more enthusiasm if their environment provides suitable stimulation. The main method of learning during childhood is play. Adults often dismiss play as a break in the serious business of living. They often place little value on it and may be worried if they see it continuing within the school programme, regarding it as something that takes time from more important activities. However, play is vital to children's learning. It is the way that they reconcile their inner lives

with external reality. In play, children gradually develop concepts of casual relationships, the power to discriminate, to make judgements, to analyse and to formulate.

They become absorbed in their play and the satisfaction bringing it to a satisfactory conclusion fixes habit of concentration which can be transferred to other learning. Play, therefore, is the key to development in many areas. It is the business and main work of childhood. However it must always be full of pleasure for the child in order to bring its full potential to growth and learning. Therefore it will have a major role to play in the infant classroom.

Parents should try to communicate a positive attitude to school, encouraging the child to look forward to the experience. Many parents for whom school was not a happy experience unwittingly communicate this to their children, so that the child often reacts to the parent's apprehension rather than any real fears of their own.

Encourage and develop the child's communication skills, as children who can express themselves well and who have learned that doing so is usually effective, will ask questions when in doubt and express their need to the teacher, a skill which is obviously helpful in adjusting to the new school environment.

The habit of good communication, started in childhood, can last into maturity setting a pattern for the child's future relationships.

Encourage the child to express their feelings / emotions in a controlled way, ideally by putting these feelings (e.g. anger) into appropriate and acceptable words. It should be accepted that a child, like an adult, has a right to be annoyed when badly treated and to express this in a controlled way.

## **Parent Teacher Meeting**

A Parent Teacher Meeting is held once a year on an appointment system, so that parents and teachers can discuss the child's progress.

However, parents are welcome to make arrangements to discuss their child's performance, interests, problems or concerns at any time. It is most important that the school and parents work together with understanding and sympathy.

The principal and staff talk informally to parents regularly, and matters needing only brief discussion can be dealt with in this way. However, if you need a prolonged discussion please make an appointment in advance. Notes are sent home by staff on matters such as trips, activities, etc. You may find a note written in the child's homework notebook, and you may use the notebook for certain communications.

## **Homework**

The object of homework, when given, is to consolidate the work that has been done in school, to allow the child to work independently and to give feedback to the teacher.

It is designed to train the children in habits of constant personal effort in everything they do. As part of their homework, children may also have to learn number facts / tables and spelling as well as doing any school work not completed during school time.

### ***How parents can help***

Homework should be done as soon as possible after school, while it is still fresh in the child's mind. Preferably it should be done in one time block.

Seek peace and quiet for the duration, with the radio / television turned off, and all other distractions removed. Don't be afraid to offer assistance but try to lead the child to answer problems themselves, rather than give them the information.

Do not be put off by the feeling that "its all different now". By looking at the child's textbooks you will learn the more modern approaches to the different subjects. Give praise for the work that your child is doing. Read over with him and point out errors if necessary.

Check your child's homework notebook to see that all given homework has been completed, or to see if the teacher has written a note for you. Inform the teacher if homework assignments seem too heavy so that suitable adjustments can be made. Check such details as neat ruling, correct headings, adequate effort with writing, spelling and punctuation.

Homework is not a punishment, an alternative to television or a means to keep your child busy or quiet. Children should UNDERSTAND and BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THE SET TASKS. It should be completed in a reasonable time. Long drawn out homework sessions can be avoided by putting a time limit on the child. Reading time is excluded from these periods, since reading is an activity which transcends homework. When parents or children are checking time spent on homework, it is important to count only the actual work time not the time spent preparing etc.

If at any stage your child is upset by the tasks set for them, a note to the teacher should sort things out and will help to identify their problems.

The following are some guidelines regarding the duration or length homework should take.

- Junior Infants – 5 Minutes occasionally at the discretion of the teacher later in the year.
- Senior Infants – 10 Minutes
- First Class – 20 Minutes
- Second Class – 20 / 30 Minutes
- Third Class – 30 / 40 Minutes
- Fourth Class – 40 / 50 Minutes
- Fifth Class – 50 / 60 Minutes
- Sixth Class – 60 / 75 Minutes

## **Code of Behaviour and Discipline**

### ***Introduction***

As a staff, we are committed to the creation of a warm and friendly atmosphere in the school where there is a sense of good order and an atmosphere conducive to learning. Our aim is to create a secure environment to ensure everyone's well being and safety and to maintain a happy, harmonious, working school.

Without discipline society would disintegrate. We all have to accept external discipline in the form of the laws of our society. Gradually as they grow older, children are expected to observe some rules of

behaviour, in accordance with the demands of society, be it within school or in the home environment.

Children may battle against this, some more strongly than others, but the parent's and teacher's role is to gently but firmly insist on compliance, with patience and consistency. It is through this process that the child learns behaviour appropriate to his / her ages and the society in which he / she lives. Explaining the rules to the child, and also the reasons for the rules this helps the child to understand and internalise the rules and it diminishes the need for external enforcement. Children can be encouraged to see the effects of their attitudes and behaviour on the school community as well as on their own progress. Your support is important so that children learn quickly the sort of conduct that is acceptable in terms of the good behaviour and manners needed for living together in a community.

### ***Some Principles***

Children of primary school age depend on the directions of their teacher to help them develop that control that is necessary for them if they are to master the art of working and playing in large groups. A major incentive to learning is a pupil-teacher relationship based on respect and co-operation rather than fear. The more positively children are motivated; the less need there will be for external discipline of any kind.

The quality of teaching has a direct influence on pupil behaviour. Lively and stimulating methods with work well matched to pupils' abilities are likely to receive a positive response from children.

Positive expectations can make pupils more responsible in their work and conduct. Parents play a crucial role in shaping attitudes in their children, which produce good behaviour in school. To maintain high standards of behaviour, the school must rely on the support and co-operation of the parents. The primary responsibility for the behaviour of pupils when they come to school lies with their parents.

Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to abide by the school rules and by visiting the school when requested by the Principal or other members of the teaching staff.

Please communicate regularly with the school about factors likely to affect the behaviour of your child at school.

This Code of behaviour and discipline has been drawn up by the Principal in accordance with the Department of Education guidelines.

It has been agreed by staff and ratified by Board of Management.

The aim of this code of behaviour and discipline is to help create a positive learning environment, relatively free from disruption in which every pupil is encouraged to become more self disciplined and can benefit from school.

We wish to;

- Maintain a high level of co-operation among / between staff, pupils and parents creating a strong sense of community within the school leading to a high standard of behaviour.
- Help organise a large group so that school can operate smoothly for the benefit of all.
- Care in a practical way for pupils, staff, visitors, the school & its environment.

- Offer a framework within which positive techniques of motivation encouragement and praise of good behaviour are utilised by teachers.
- Keep rules to a minimum stating them positively in terms of what pupils should do.
- Try and ensure that the curriculum matches the abilities aptitude and interests of each pupil, thus reducing boredom, lack of interest or lack of progress.

The overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal. Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within the classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises / grounds.

The following strategies will be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour.

- a) Reasoning with the pupil.
- b) Reprimand (including advice on how to improve).
- c) Separation from peers, friends or others (Duration of separation dependent of improvement in behaviour).
- d) Prescribing additional work.
- e) Referral to Principal.
- f) Communication with Parents.

Teachers shall keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour, as well as records of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils. When sanctions are invoked, pupils should



understand that what they have done is not acceptable and that it is the misbehaviour that is rejected and not the pupil.

The procedure outlined here is followed when dealing with persistent minor misbehaviour, or serious misbehaviour by pupils. The particular step invoked will depend on the seriousness of the misbehaviour.

1. The teacher requests the pupil to stop and discusses the offending behaviour with the pupil. If the misbehaviour continues, then...
2. The pupil is reprimanded, advised on how to improve, and maybe given additional work. If the misbehaviour continues, then....
3. The child, (if old enough) is asked to write an account of how he/she is misbehaving and its effect on the work/play of others / themselves. A note is sent to the parents by the teacher. When they have discussed the contents of the note with their child, and the child decides that the unacceptable behaviour will not continue, the parents sign the note and return it to the teacher the next school-day. Principal informed. If the misbehaviour continues, then...
4. The class teacher meets with the parents of the pupil. Principal informed. If the misbehaviour continues, then...
5. Formal letter to the parents from the Principal. Parents will be asked to come to the school to meet the Principal and teacher. If the misbehaviour continues, then...

6. After consultation with parents and the teacher, the Principal may seek further help to cope with the behavioural problem; e.g. assessment, with the approval of parents.

### ***Suspension of Pupils***

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviours, suspension will be considered. In such case the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed. The parents must give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future. If not, the pupil may have to be excluded from the school, in accordance with rule 130(5) of the Rules for National Schools. The maximum initial period of such exclusion shall be three school days.

It must be stated that at Scoil Mhuire we have children whom we and their parents can be justly proud. There are very few problems, and rarely do we have anything as serious as the above might suggest.

### ***Rialacha na Scoile***

1. Pupils are expected to be seated in their classrooms at 9.00 a.m.
2. While in your room you must sit down quietly.
3. Never leave the school grounds without permission from the Principal.
4. Pupils are not to climb up on boundary walls / fences.

5. Walk slowly and quietly on the right-hand side on corridors, and when entering or leaving classroom.
6. At break time eat your lunch in the room. Go to the toilet (having got permission). If fine, get into line when told and walk to your own play area. If wet, remain quietly seated in your room.
7. When the bell rings, at the end of break-time, clean your footwear if necessary. Then walk to your line, and wait for your teacher to bring you to your classroom.
8. One person only at a time, per class is allowed to go to the toilets.
9. Bullying, threatening, rough play, kicking, fighting, pushing, hurting others deliberately and bad language are totally prohibited. (Be careful always, particularly at break time, and help prevent accidents).
10. Respect for others – teachers, all other pupils, all visitors to school essential at all times.
11. Pupils are expected to treat all school property with care. Do not write on school furniture and buildings. Breakages or damage caused must be reported immediately to the teacher.
12. Don't drop litter in your room, or in the school buildings and grounds.
13. Pupils are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school.

PARENTS – PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS THE ABOVE RULES WITH YOUR CHILD / CHILDREN.

## **Bullying:**

Bullying can be Physical, Verbal and/or Emotional.

**Physical:** e.g. Constant hitting, jostling, pushing around, constant interference with a child's possessions, books or clothes. Horseplay need not necessarily be bullying, but it can sometimes be used as an excuse for bullying.

**Verbal:** e.g. name calling, hurtful or insulting remarks about a child's appearance, parents, clothing or schoolwork.

**Emotional:** e.g. Continuously letting a child know that they are the topic of conversation and / or deliberately leaving a child out of games or group activities.

All types of bullying are damaging, but verbal and emotional bullying are more difficult to detect. Bullying can take place anywhere. It may be carried out by groups or by an individual. The most successful bullies are those who can keep their victims quiet by threatening them or humiliating them.

### ***How would you know if your child is being bullied?***

If your child is being bullied they may:

- Be unusually anxious, nervous or tense.
- Have nightmares or eating problems.
- Have unexplained bruises, scratches, etc., or come home regularly with books or clothes missing / damaged
- Constantly ask for or steal money (to pay a bully)
- Begin to bully other children
- Be unwilling to go out to play at home or at school
- Be afraid of walking to and from school, or unwilling to go to school.
- Begin to do poorly at school.
- Become isolated in the school or playground.
- Continuously make excuses to explain away any of the above.

### ***What can you do if you suspect your child is being bullied?***

- If you are worried that your child is being bullied, ask them what's wrong.
- It is not easy for children to tell about bullying so it is important to talk to your child and let them know that they can tell you if they have a problem.
- Sometimes parents tell a child to 'hit back' at the bully. This can make matters worse. Teaching children to be confident, and to tell, is far better.

- Teaching your child to say “no” in a good confident tone of voice and to carry themselves in a confident way will deter some bullies. The child can practice this at home. Children need to know that safety comes first. In a situation where a gang attacks the child they should just get away and tell. Some children with disabilities will not be able to say no or to tell. If your child has few or no words they may be able to let you know in some other way, for example through play, drawing or body language.
- Get friends to help. Encourage your child to invite friends in to play or to go on family outings.
- Children can be encouraged to join in activities where they will not come in contact with the bully. Identify places where the bullying happens and take care that your child avoids these areas if possible.
- If the bullying takes place in school, talk to your child’s teacher. The teacher may be unaware of the problem and will appreciate being told. Parents and teachers need to work together to help the child.

Tell your child that if they see someone else being bullied, they should tell. There are not innocent bystanders in bullying.

**Remember:** Many children, with a little help, overcome this problem very quickly.

### ***Why do children bully?***

There are many reasons why children bully. It may be a reaction to something else in the child's life, e.g., a new baby, a death in the family, a sudden illness or difficult home problems.

Children who bully often have been bullied themselves. Some bullies suffer from a lack of self-confidence and have low self esteem. They can be attention-seekers, trying to impress others by their bullying behavior. Children who are under pressure to succeed at all costs may try to bully their way to success.

### ***What can you do if your child is a bully?***

- Talk to your child and try to find out if there is a problem.
- Don't punish bullying by being a bully yourself. Hitting or shouting at the child will make the situation worse.
- Let the child know that it is wrong to bully. Explain how the victim feels. Try to get your child to understand the victim's point of view.
- Contact your child's teacher and let them know about the problem. Parents and teachers together can help the child. Other people who care for your child may also be able to help with this problem.

### **Mission Statement**

We, the staff of Scoil Mhuire, Maigh Cuilinn, are dedicated to the creation of a pleasant, relaxed, safe, controlled learning environment

providing for the personal, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual development of each child.

We wish to enable each child to; realize their maximum potential, to develop self-confidence, security and to develop as well adjusted human beings and responsible citizens.

## **Cuspóir na Scoile**

Deanann foireann na Scoile seo tréan iarracht atmasféar foghlama a chruthú atá suaimhneach, sábháilte, taitneamhach agus smachtaithe a dhéanann freastal ar fhorbairt phearsanta, shoistialta, intleachtach morálta agus spiriodálta gach paiste. Is mian linn a chur ar chumas gach páiste a uas mhianach a bhaint amach, a bheith feinmhuineach agus forbairt mar dhuine cumasach stuama agus mór shaoránach freagrach.

## **Principles**

Education in Scoil Mhuire is guided by the following five principles which are outlined in two major documents; Curaclam na Bunscoile, Teachers' Handbooks (1971) and in the Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (The Quinlan Report) 1990.

### ***a) Full and Harmonious Development***

The Teachers' handbook states:-

*“all children are complex human beings with physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs and potentialities. A curriculum which is designed to achieve this aim (full life as a child) must, therefore,*



*endeavour to cater for the full and harmonious development of each child”*  
(p.13, part 1)

The Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum supported this principle and adds:-

*That the curriculum should be organised in such a way as to promote all aspects of children’s development, while at the same time allowing for priorities within the curriculum.* (p.14)

The principle of full and harmonious development implies a broadly based and balanced curriculum. It stresses the need for the development of all aspects of the individual child – aesthetic, creative, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual. Contents are currently arranged under Religion, Language, Mathematics, Social and Environmental Studies, Art & Crafts, Music and Physical Education. Each area of the curriculum should be given due and appropriate attention in any programme of school planning.

### ***b) Due Allowance for Individual Differences***

The Teachers’ Handbook Part 1 states:-

*“Because each child is an individual, he deserves to be valued for himself and to be provided with the kind and variety of opportunities ... to develop...at his own rate to his fullest capacity.”* (p.13, part 1)

The Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum supports this principle and adds:-

*“In addition to a recognition of individual differences in ability, there is a need for a recognition of and a tolerance of individual differences in emotional, social and personality development. The review body is in agreement with the priority of providing for pupils with learning difficulties. However, the Review Body also feels that there is a need for provision for the very able pupils. Furthermore, there is a need to cater for pupils with*

*outstanding talent, particularly in the expressive arts, in view of the poor provision for exceptional talent in these areas.”(p.16)*

The principle of due allowance for individual differences’ recognises that because rates of progress are not uniform, content and methodology will vary depending on the stages of development of each child. This will entail:-

1. Detailed planning and preparation, both at school and individual classroom level in order for individual differences.
2. The provision of suitable materials and equipment.
3. The practice of grouping children by ability.
4. The practice of individual record keeping.

### ***Activity and Discovery Methods***

The Teachers’ Handbook highlights the importance of the child as an active agent in his / her own learning and states:-

*“While the principles of investigation, observation and discovery should be applied to as many situations as possible, the potential and scope of the methods employed will depend greatly on intelligent guidance by the teacher. He will advise, direct and help his pupils along the road to discovery when he considers such assistance necessary. (p. 134, Part 2)*

The Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum affirmed the value of directed discovery methods and adds:-

“In this regard, we feel that a revision of the Handbook should differentiate between free and directed discovery, which in most instances classroom activity should be focused on directed discovery, and that teachers should be urged to adopt a diversity teaching styles. In practice the value of discovery methods will depend on a variety of factors including:-

1. the type of learning objective
2. the age and background of pupils
3. the pedagogic preferences of the teacher and
4. the constraints in the classroom.

It is generally accepted that children learn best by exploration and discovery through engaging in relevant activities. Children also learn through social interaction between pupil and teacher and language plays an important part in this process. Education consists of a cumulative and continuous acquisition, interpretation, combination and recording of experiences. Teachers, therefore, use a variety of methods including discovery learning, guided learning and directed learning. Rather than seeing discovery method as experiences that involve the teacher only minimally. The Review body sees such learning as requiring a high level of teacher skill preparation.

### ***Integrated Curriculum***

In promoting the principle of an integrated curriculum the Teachers' Handbook states:-

The integration of the curriculum may be seen:

1. in the religious and civic spirit which animates all its parts
2. in its recognition of language, mathematics and artistic expression, not merely as specific areas of knowledge and activity but even more essentially as the means by which all knowledge and experience are organised and made meaningful.
3. In its emphasis on the fact that the child's environment provides the most congenial ground in which the seeds of knowledge may be sown and its organic growth fostered.

The report of the review body on the primary curriculum reinforces integration as a pedagogic principle and recommends:-

*“that integration should be thought of as a pedagogic principle, and as such it suggests that links should be established between various areas and aspects of the curriculum. This does not mean that the traditional divisions between subject disciplines should be discarded. Before the introduction of the 1971 curriculum, there was a tendency for rigid timetabling to dominate the school schedule. In this context, the integration principle provided a flexibility that was widely welcomed. The experience of this principle has largely been positive and it has had a beneficial effect on pedagogy. We think that it should be retained as a central pedagogic principle.” (p. 19)*

The principle of “integration” is presented as a unification of the diverse elements of the curriculum to form a cohesive whole – a unified entity, while its various aspects are presented as generally corresponding to traditional subject areas.

### ***Environment Based Learning***

The Teachers’ Handbook promotes environment based learning and points out that:-

*“The child’s environment provides the most congenial ground in which the seeds of knowledge may be sown and its organic growth fosters.” (p.20, Part 1)*

It is also suggested that the plan of work for the school should incorporate the principles of integration and the environmental approach (p.21, Part 1)

In its recommendations the review body on the primary curriculum support and further develop this idea:-

“This principle should be seen as an antidote to the book-bound approach. It was never intended that this principle should imply that each locality should have a different curriculum. Rather than being a limiting factor, the local environment should be used in several ways for the teaching of a variety of topics. We suggest the following possibilities in this regard; the local environment might be used,

1. as a springboard for learning.
2. as a resource or a repository of physical, human and cultural resources
3. as a topic for study in itself in all aspects
4. as an integrating factor.

The concept of the environment should be broadened to include the cultural and historical environment. In this sense, the principle could be related to the well established practice of explaining the unfamiliar in terms of experiences and encounters that are already part of the child’s experiences. In other words, the environment can be a valuable resource, and use of the environment is a useful pedagogical principle. (p.20/21).

### ***Philosophy***

The philosophy of the school is in harmony with these principles and school planning, organisational and curricular planning is guided by them.

## ***General Objectives***

The general objectives of the school curriculum are to help children to:-

- Communicate clearly and confidently
- Listen attentively and with understanding
- Speak clearly and effectively
- Read fluently and with understanding
- Learn the habit of reading for leisure
- Write fluently and legible and acquire an appropriate standard of spelling, syntax and punctuation
- Locate, extract, record and interpret information from various sources.
- Develop a competence in a second language (English in Gaeltacht areas, Gaeilge in Galltacht areas) at a level appropriate to their ability and cultural and linguistic background
- Understand computational skills and apply them with accuracy and speed
- Understand and apply mathematical concepts
- Develop analytic and problem solving skills, including in the investigation of solutions and the interpretation of evidence.
- Understand and apply basic scientific ideas.
- Extend their knowledge of and general curiosity in the characteristics of animate and inanimate things
- Extend their knowledge of and develop an interest in historical, geographical, social and natural aspects of their environment and cultural heritage.

- Acquire knowledge of and an interest in the history and geography of places and times removed from their own.
- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of the arts.

## ***Aims and Objectives***

### **General Aims**

- To enable children to live full lives as children
- To equip them to avail themselves of further education
- To prepare them to live full and useful lives as adults in society

### **Specific Aims**

The specific aims of the primary curriculum (which are not listed in any order of priority) as recommended by the review body are:

- To help children to think clearly, creatively and critically and to act independently.
- To help in fostering the desire to learn, encourage children to a sense of self esteem and cultivate in them the motivation to apply themselves to worthwhile and satisfying activities.
- To help children to develop their creative and imaginative capacities, through both expressive and appreciative activities.
- To help children to acquire knowledge, skills and practical abilities and the desire to use them.
- To help children to develop physically
- To help children to understand the society and environment in which they live, the interdependence of people and nations, and to foster a spirit of cooperation and the capacity and willingness

to contribute in a critical but positive manner towards the development of society.

- To help children to respect, appreciate and understand their own and other cultural identities.
- To help children to acquire and develop moral and religious values and a respect for the beliefs and values held by others.
- To help children to prepare for the social, domestic, recreational and working aspects of their adult lives.
- Develop the skills and knowledge to express themselves through various aesthetic activities, including drama, language, movement, music and visual arts
- Develop a positive awareness of self and sensitivity to others, and a respect for the rights, views and feelings of other people.
- Develop self discipline and acceptable behaviour
- Develop the capacity to make moral judgements
- Develop spiritually
- Extend their knowledge of and develop an understanding of their own religious traditions and beliefs and develop a respect for the religious traditions and beliefs of others.
- Develop agility and physical coordination
- Acquire a knowledge and understanding of their bodies and develop a sense of responsibility for their own health.