

Sonas



**Special Junior Primary School
Cork Road, Carrigaline, Co. Cork**

June 2017

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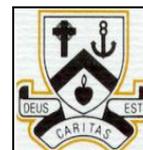
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Roll No. 201620



Information Pack for Parents

Welcome to Sonas Special Junior Primary School!

If your child is to join us for the first time we welcome you as parents and look forward to a happy and successful association over the coming years. If you already have a child here, we are pleased to renew the link between us.

This booklet provides information on the school, its aims, curriculum and activities. Confidence in a school comes from knowledge and understanding of what is happening within it.

We hope you will extend your knowledge through contact and discussion with myself and members of staff and take advantage of the occasions for consultation. We want parents to feel welcome and valued in the school and encourage their support and involvement. It is important that mutual understanding and trust shall be the basis of our shared responsibility.

Bairbre Doyle
Principal

Diarmuid O'Mathúna
Chairperson
Board of Management

Mission Statement

Sonas is a school that nourishes each individual in a secure, friendly, and approachable environment.

We provide a stimulating setting in which each child can maximise their learning potential, grow and develop in independence and confidence, with an emphasis on fun, enjoyment and balance of life. We welcome the co-operation and support of each child's family.

In Sonas Special Junior Primary School we seek to create a happy, caring, stable environment where each child will have the opportunity to develop all its abilities. A positive attitude is actively encouraged so that the children's strengths are developed.

We believe that:

- *All pupils have an innate ability to learn. We aim to nurture and develop this ability.*
- *Pupils have differing learning styles and processes and teachers need to be aware of and tailor their teaching to meet individual needs.*
- *Pupils learn at differing rates and so teaching and programmes need to be individualised.*
- *Pupils learn best when they experience success.*
- *Pupils learn best when they are safe, secure and happy in their surroundings and with familiar adults.*
- *Each child is unique and that human relationships are the foundations for all learning and teaching.*

For Your Information

Sonas Special Junior Primary School received recognition from the Department of Education and Science as a school for children with autism on the 7th January 2003. Previous to this date, Sonas Pre-school Service was under the Department of Health.

The school campus has 2 premises – the original school on the Cork Road, Carrigaline and the additional location in Heronswood Estate, Carrigaline. Sonas caters for 42 children aged between three and six years. In the main school building on Cork Road, accommodation includes an Assembly Hall, school office, Sensory Room, Climbing Room, Soft Room, Ball Pool, OT Room, Library and PE Hall. An extension to the rear of the main building provides accommodation for classrooms with separate rooms for Speech and Language Therapy, Psychology, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy and a Principal's office. The outdoor facilities include an equipped Playground, an Outdoor cycling area, Sensory Garden, Sand Shed, Aistear Room, bike shed and Multi-activity Room.

The Heronswood premises has 3 classrooms. The facilities include a Soft Room, Sensory Room, Ball Pool, Aistear Room, Multi-activity Room, Sensory garden, fully equipped Playground, Sand Shed, Bike Shed and large surfaced cycling area/yard.

Your child's class will be identified by a colour. Each class has a teacher and a team of Special Needs Assistants. Although the children will be attached to one of these classes, the ethos of team teaching and co-operative learning in Sonas means that children may go to other classes and groups during the school day.

School Hours

School begins at 9.30 am and finishes at 2.00 pm, Monday to Friday. If a child is unable to attend school, please contact the school before 9.30 am on the morning in question.

Health and Safety

The gates of the school in Cork Road are closed while the children are in the building. The front door is strictly monitored in the morning and afternoon.

Board of Management - Sonas Special Junior Primary School

The Board of Management has eight members in all.

Mr. Diarmuid O'Mathúna (Chairperson)
Ms. Joanna Gill (Patron's Representative)
Mr. Declan Flynn (Community Representative)
Mr. Colm Lyons (Community Representative)
Mr. Barry Buckley (Parents Representative-male)
Ms. Eva Shalloo (Parents Representative - female)
Ms. Karen Flowers (Teacher Representative)
Ms. Bairbre Doyle (Principal)

Multi-Disciplinary Team

Speech and Language Therapist - Lorna Daunt & Rachel O'Donovan
Occupational Therapist – Evelyn Lynch
Psychologist – Dr. Maureen Casey & Dearbhla Crowley
Physiotherapist - Roesia Lordan

Teaching and Ancillary Staff

Principal – Bairbre Doyle
Deputy Principal – Karen Flowers

School Secretary: Patricia O'Mahony & Orla Twohig

Teachers: Karen Flowers, Fiona Dalton, Patricia Mellerick, Aideen Caesar,
Eimear Mullan, Michelle Murphy, Anne Collins.

Special Needs Assistants:

Pauline Bagnall (Job share)	Shirley McCarthy	Declan Rice
Tara Murphy	Tracey Murphy	Maureen O'Sullivan
Ruth O'Mahony	Aoife Finnegan	Neil O'Sullivan
Anthea McGinley	Deirdre Delaney	Mary Leahy
Claire Sexton	Karen Miskella	Karen McFall
Niamh Shortt	Ruth O'Mahony	
Pam Soltan (Job share)	Áine O'Sullivan	

Caretaker: Joe O'Reilly

Cleaner: Martha Murphy & Marie Butt

Teaching and Learning

Each classroom is set up following the principles of the **TEACCH** method (**Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children**). The children are involved in a visually clear, highly structured teaching system. The aim is to encourage social interaction, communication and independence and therefore enable the children to access appropriate curricular areas. Visual schedules which allow the pupils to anticipate and predict activities are used in the school. The priority of the **TEACCH** method is to focus on the individual by starting where the child is at and helping them develop as far as they can go. It capitalises on the individual's interests, increasing motivation and understanding of what the child is doing. The **TEACCH** method is broad based taking into account all aspects of the lives of children with autism.

Individual work systems convey:

- What work is to be done?
- How much work is to be done
- How the pupil will know when work is finished.
- What happens after work is completed.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is used throughout the school and also encouraged to be used at home. The focus is on empowering the child to initiate communication by giving another person a picture in exchange for what he or she wants. There are six phases in the use of PECS –the child moves from single pictures to using sentences to comment, as well as request. Research has shown that children using the system often start to use speech. Prior to teaching the first phase, an assessment is made of what the child enjoys so these items are then used as motivators to help communication.

More Than Words is the Hanen Programme for parents with children on the autistic spectrum (ASD), which is run by Hanen certified Speech and Language Therapists. It is based on the principles of early intervention and recognition that parents are their children's best, earliest and most consistent educators. "More than Words" uses 'tried and true' elements of successful programmes for children with autism. The programme's focus is to educate and enable parents to use everyday situations to enhance their children's communication skills. The programme is run regularly and will be offered to the families of children who attend Sonas.

Intensive Interaction is an approach that is based on early infant-caregiver interactions. In these sessions, each partner responds to the others early interactions (e.g. using facial expression, vocalisations, movements and gestures) with joint attention and turn-taking. As each individual enjoys the interaction, they are motivated to continue. Intensive interaction allows the child to lead with the adult responding to and giving intention to their behaviours, thus the child learns that they can affect others and communicate meaning.

Assessment and Individual Educational Programmes

New children to Sonas attend school on a phased basis during the month of September. The main aim is for children to settle gradually into their new environment. Our goal is to develop a relationship with the child. Parents fill in a Questionnaire designed to give the staff an insight into the child. When your child starts in September, the initial weeks will be used to ascertain as much information about his/her learning and development needs through observations and assessments, such as the PEP-R (Psycho-Educational Profile). The PEP-R is an assessment tool devised by TEACCH to give a profile of the child's skills and learning problems that graphically represents their uneven mental development and includes seven main areas;

- Imitation
- Perception
- Gross motor
- Fine motor
- Eye-hand integration
- Cognitive; performance
- Cognitive; verbal

The profile reflects not only skills already acquired, but also indicates areas in which the child's skills are still being developed. It is these partially acquired or 'emerging skills' which form the basis for each child's individualised teaching programme. It is not necessary for a child to be placed in a typical test situation; he or she may be observed in a routine school or home environment. The advantages of this assessment are that:

- The items are developmentally arranged and selected from a range of teaching activities that have been empirically established as suitable for the target population.
- The items do not have to be presented in any order, which provides flexibility in administration and allows the examiner to respond to the child's interests and responses.
- Language requirements are minimal, both in terms of directions for tasks and for responses.
- The scoring system takes into account idiosyncratic responses that ordinarily are disregarded on other standardised tests;
- Uniquely, the PEP provides the opportunity to teach the task in order to identify his or her readiness and ability to learn new skill.

Whereas most tests evaluate a child on two levels, passing or failing, the PEP-R provides a third and unique level known as emerging, which is 'a response that shows that a child has some knowledge of what is required for the task but does not have the full understanding or skill to complete the task successfully'

Individual Educational Programme (IEP)

The IEP for all children in Sonas takes place in September/October each year. For new children to Sonas, an IEP meeting will take place when your child has settled into the school (approx. mid October). This meeting is a collaborative approach between the teacher, the multi-d team and the parents. The meeting will last one hour and the aim is to agree collectively on three priority areas for your child. At the end of the meeting we will have identified three priority needs and three-year goals to provide for these needs. Each year goal will then be broken down into six weekly tasks throughout the academic year. You, as parents will be actively involved in some of these tasks every two weeks in order to facilitate broad generalisation of learned skills in different situations and environments.

The School Curriculum

Our programme in Sonas encompasses an eclectic approach that gives the opportunity to take the best aspects of different approaches to provide the most effective education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

It is generally agreed that no single approach is likely to meet the needs of all children with autistic spectrum disorder. (Jordan, Jones and Murray, 1998). Fundamental to any educational provision is a curriculum that addresses the difficulties these children experience in communication, social interaction and thinking skills. The emphasis is on the development of communication and social interaction and on helping children to become as independent as possible

The curriculum of the school is designed to give a broad and balanced education to all children and to present all children with experiences suitable to their current stages of development. All classes are mixed ability and the following areas are covered in the school.

- Personal, social, and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Mathematical development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

The **Sensory Needs** of each child are provided for in the Sensory Room, Soft Room, Ball Pool and Swing Room.

Among the benefits of sensory activities room are:

- Changed or improved behaviour
- Better concentration and motivation
- Calm alert state which is essential for learning

Speech and Language Therapist

SLT is currently provided by the Brothers of Charity Southern Services (BOCSS) to the children in Sonas Special Junior Primary School. The Speech & Language Therapy service assesses the child's communication needs and identifies appropriate skills to develop. SLT input will vary according to the needs of each child.

Communication is happening all the time, not just when your child is with the SLT. Therefore, it is important that the SLT programme forms part of your child's day both in school and at home.

The SLT service works closely with the child, their families and/or their caregivers, Multi-D Team, teachers, SNAs and anyone else concerned with your child.

Intervention is provided through a variety of strategies based on your child's needs at a particular time. This may consist of direct or indirect intervention, specific training to families and/or caregivers, school staff and other key professionals working with your child.

Psychologist

The key priority for the psychologist is to provide support to both teachers and parents around a variety of psychological issues. Such issues include developing positive behaviour management strategies, modifying educational strategies to suit the individual learning style of each student, and addressing the social and emotional needs of the students. A number of talks and in services are provided to parents and teachers throughout the year. When students are ready to leave Sonas, the psychologist assists with the transition process by conducting psychological evaluations and providing recommendations through the multi-disciplinary team.

Physiotherapist

Physiotherapy is based on the idea that human movement is central to an individual's health and wellbeing. The role of the physiotherapist is to look at a child's gross motor skills and to:

- Provide assessment, advice and intervention for any child who may be experiencing difficulties.
- Facilitate the development of gross motor skills.
- Help the child achieve good posture, muscle strength, balance and co-ordination.

Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapy is provided to the children in Sonas by referral to the Brothers of Charity Southern Services.

The primary role of the Occupational Therapist is to facilitate educational outcomes in collaboration with other professionals who are providing services for the child and family. (AOTA, 1997).

This service is provided through:

- Initial screening of children to determine the need for an in-depth assessment/intervention.
- Evaluation and Intervention
Evaluation through the school year may include informal observations/clinical, observations/discussions with staff and parents/caregivers.

Intervention may include consultation with staff to plan strategies/ modifications of environment/individual sessions/sensory motor groups/demonstration of specific techniques and activities that can be implemented at home to facilitate functional performance.

The Occupational Therapy Services work closely with the child's family, Multi-D Team members, teaching staff, SNAs etc.

Contact with Parents

The staff at the School seeks to develop and enhance good relationships with parents. The School recognises that learning begins at home and values the role which parents play in the education of their children. Teachers' time is made available to meet parents on **Fridays from 2pm - 2.40pm by prior arrangement.**

Daily Home/School Notebook is in operation in the school as a communicating tool between parents and the class team. Each day, the teachers inform parents about activities; behavior, your child's well being etc. Parents are encouraged to use the diary as information regarding home activities; visits, sleepless nights etc. which is beneficial to staff.

A detailed **Newsletter** is sent home to parents monthly informing them of school and staff news.

Information Meetings for Parents

Information Meetings for parents are held in the school regularly. Parents are invited to the school and are given information on topics of interest e.g. autism, communication, behaviour etc. The multi-disciplinary team may be involved in these Information Meetings.

Parents Association

Sonas has an active Parents Association. Representatives may be contacted through the school secretary.

Lunch

Lunch breaks take place twice each day - a small break and big break. These eating times are an integral part of the school day and are supervised by staff. Emphasis is placed on social skills, developing independence, communication and good eating habits.

A school meals scheme - *School Meals Local Project Scheme under the Dept. of Social Protection* – commenced delivery of lunches to Sonas in September 2013.

Carambola is the company chosen to provide the lunches. Parents will be contacted early in September about the arrangements for ordering your child's lunch.

Until this lunch is available, please ensure that you mark your child's name on his/her lunch box, drinking bottle, etc.

School Uniform

The school encourages the wearing of a uniform for practical purposes. The uniform consists of a navy jumper (zip-up option available), navy tracksuit pants and red polo

t-shirt. If parents wish, an all-weather jacket bearing the Sonas logo is also available. However, it is not compulsory to purchase the uniform with the logo as it is acceptable for the children to wear a red polo t-shirt and navy tracksuit. (*Uniform Supplier is 4orm, Carrigaline Estuary Business Park, Crosshaven Road, Carrigaline, Co. Cork. Tel: 021-4372969 (Steve) www.4orm.ie*)

Shoes/ runners must be velcro-tied and marked with your child's name. A set of spare clothes, wellingtons and raingear must be sent to the school for your child. Parents are encouraged to label each item of clothing and footwear.

At the end of June each year, the Parents Association organises a coffee morning during which pre-loved uniforms donated by parents are made available to any parents who are interested in acquiring a spare set .

Change of Clothes

A complete set of spare clothes including socks is to be left in school. If your child is not toilet-trained, please send in 'pull-ups' and at least 3 changes of underwear daily during toilet-training. Also, extra pair of tracksuit pants, socks and baby wipes are required.

Raingear including wellies and your child's **Cycling Safety Helmets** are to be kept in school.

School Sack

The recommended size is 30 cms. x 40 cms. to accommodate lunchboxes and folders. *Sometimes bags are too small and a child will have to carry 2 bags.*

Social Outings

Each class has a regular social outing to various places e.g. the library, the ducks, local playground, coffee shop, shopping centre, local newsagent. Class groups have occasional trips to Douglas and adventure play centres. Other examples of social outings include bowling, trips to Cork Opera House, Cork POPS Orchestra in the City Hall, Open Farms and walks in the woods. (*see cost below*)

Swimming

Each child gets a block of 15 swimming session per year in the swimming pool on Lota campus. A bus is hired to take the group to the pool. Rose Gilbert is our trained swimming instructor and supervises these sessions. Please provide suitable swimming bag with towel, armbands, hat, togs, body wash (and swimmers 'pull-ups' if your child is not yet toilet-trained). Please do not use string bags for swimming gear as they are difficult for a child to carry. (*see cost below*)

Gymnastics

Every Tuesday, two gymnastics coaches from the Rock Gymnastics Club conduct classes with the children throughout the year.

Cork Pops

Each year the children make a visit to the Cork City Hall to attend the Cork Pops. This is a long-standing tradition in the school and the children enjoy the opportunity to experience a live performance by an orchestra having been familiarised with the repertoire in the weeks before the performance.

Money due to be paid to the school.

- *€100 annual contribution.*
- *€40 for social outings/cookery/ sensory play at the start of each of the three terms to your child's class teacher. A receipt will be issued directly from the class teacher.*
- *€250 per year for swimming lessons, gymnastics lessons & Cork Pops trip. If preferred, this fee may be paid termly at a cost of €88. The first payment will fall due in the last week of September. These payments can be made directly to the school using the Aladdin on-line payments system*

School Transport

Parents who wish to apply for school transport for their child may do so on an application form which is made available to them when their children are enrolled in the school. Escorts accompany the child/children on school transport to provide for the safety of the child while travelling in the taxi.