

# Important School News, Details and Changes

*Please read carefully!*

Every year in this section we set out those essential areas where we need a bit of extra help from parents and, as with every year, we just want to start by saying *thank you* – the support we get back in return is exceptionally positive which in turn makes a huge difference in helping us to run the school as smoothly as possible. In particular in recent years we appealed for help in tightening up on the uniform, punctuality, discipline, etc and the response has been terrific. As we've said before, the school's policies can sometimes seem a bit draconian, but it's because we want to set the highest standards for East Glendalough School.

## **Uniform**

Every year, Uniform is the first item on this list. The nature of school life is that the way the uniform is worn deteriorates as the year goes on and every September, we try to tighten up on any aspects that may have become weak. We try not to make an issue of things towards the end of the school year so that parents don't have to purchase expensive items that will need further changing in the summer as your child grows. However, in return, we emphasise that you have the summer to get things right, and we will not permit unacceptable uniform when the school reopens in September.

In particular, this year we wish to reiterate a couple of areas of the uniform which are often weakest:

### **(i) Shoes**

These should be **Black FORMAL shoes**.

We really don't think we need to explain the meaning of the word "formal" above – it's pretty obvious and we hope parents will know what we're looking for. However, if you're in any doubt about whether a shoe is suitably formal, please contact us before an expensive purchase. **Sports or canvas shoes – even all black ones – are not going to be permitted.** Parents purchasing deck shoes or Dubarrys should ensure that the leather upper is **black**.

We also strongly recommend that girls in particular wear shoes that give their feet sufficient support.

### **(ii) Skirts**

All skirts should be **KNEE-LENGTH** or longer.

As has been the case in recent years, where the School feels that the skirt has been worn too high, this will not be accepted in September. In many cases, girls are rolling up the skirt, but **please check that your daughter's skirt is of sufficient length.** New skirts should be purchased if the current one is too short.

**(iii) Hair**

The vast majority of students who come to School do so with their hair in a neat and orderly state. The current fashion, particularly among boys, has seen a small minority come with very tight hair. We will monitor this, and if we feel that a student's hair is too short or inappropriate, we may send them home. **Please note that a 'blade zero' or a 'blade one' is unacceptable.**

**(iv) Nose studs**

Nose studs/facial piercings are not allowed (as per the uniform list).

The uniform is set out in the enclosed Uniform List. We expect parents to help us by making sure your children wear the correct and full uniform throughout the year. Please note that we have to establish this uniform from the very start, and **pupils who arrive to school without the correct uniform will be sent home**. This won't count as a formal 'suspension', but at the same time they won't be permitted to go to classes until the matter is rectified. Please don't put us in the position where we have to exclude your child from classes! Students who wear the right uniform, but wear it badly will receive a sanction in the school - usually in terms of a lunchtime detention.

***School Policies***

As part of an ongoing review of policy, the East Glendalough School Board of Management has published a full set of policies on the School website ([www.egs.ie](http://www.egs.ie)). Of particular note are the **ICT and Mobile Phone Acceptable Use Policy** and the School's **Anti-Bullying Policy**, both of which we would recommend parents read.

***Stationery Fees***

The stationery fee is payable on the first day back for all students except Transition Year (whose costs are covered in the Transition Year fee), and may I make a special request that you please help the office staff who are extremely busy in September by paying the stationery fees on time.

In the last few years, we have been trying to trim back costs for parents as much as possible, and as with last year, the Stationery Fee is €45 this year. We also ask parents to get a set of ten 88 page copybooks for each child – we used to supply these in school, but think you may be able to get better value if you buy them yourselves.

The Stationery Fee also includes compulsory personal accident insurance cover provided by *AIG Ltd*. We made this mandatory some years ago because the vast majority of families availed of this cover anyway, but every year we came across others who genuinely meant to take out the cover, forgot to do so, and then found themselves dealing with expensive medical bills they could have avoided. There are no forms to complete, and for Transition Year students, the Insurance premium will be added to the TY Fees Invoice.

The important news on this insurance is that the policy gives round-the-clock 24-hour cover and isn't restricted to school activities. In the last year, many parents have been able to claim for a range of accidents that happened at home. So if your child DOES suffer an injury at any stage (and let's face it, teenagers have a remarkable proclivity for chipping teeth, breaking bones, tearing themselves open or hurting themselves in a host of other assorted, and often very imaginative and colourful ways) just contact the office and we'll help you make a claim. It really is extraordinarily good value for the number of claims that are made against it.

### ***Expenses***

Stationery costs continue to increase year on year for the school – especially photocopying and exam stationery, but we continue to do our utmost to keep things as cheap as possible for parents. A concerted effort has been made by staff to reduce school-book requirements as much as possible. However, we do appreciate that August is a very expensive time for parents.

It is possible for families to access a scheme run by **Protestant Aid**. The main thrust of this scheme is to help families with expenses for books, uniform, travel and other direct costs. It will be open to students commencing 1<sup>st</sup> Year, Transition Year and 5<sup>th</sup> Year. If your child is in these years and you are struggling to afford school costs, please, please, please contact Mr Petrie for a confidential application form: Protestant Aid are only too willing to help.

### ***School Finance***

The school's finances (full details of which will be available for parents at the Parents' Association AGM) remain under pressure: there has still been no alleviation of the cuts brought in several years ago in terms of our budget.

In terms of day-to-day spending, we continue to operate on a knife-edge. We have persisted with our policy of greatly subsidising the curriculum by paying for extra teaching staff from our Voluntary Contribution revenue. As you know by now, we consider this the best money we could possibly spend – it allows us smaller, more effective classes and a vastly superior range of subject choices. Without this assistance, the pastoral care and extra-curricular opportunities available to our students would be greatly curtailed.

We haven't the comfort of a big bank of savings to fall back on, but what we have relied on in the last number of years is the reaction from parents in response to hearing that things are difficult. We have always had a very high payment rate of the Voluntary Contribution (a great many people are now using the monthly Standing Order

system). We appreciate that family finances are hit time after time, but we must emphasise that the Voluntary Contribution is what allows us to offer the broad educational experience we do.

### ***The Voluntary Contribution***

In recent years, the Parents' Association has asked that the School send out details of the next year's Voluntary Contribution at this stage, to allow parents to make the contribution now if they want to do, or to make preparation for payment at a later date. In the past, we have perhaps been too terribly timid and polite about the Voluntary Contribution, and have sometimes ended up leaving parents confused about paying it and how much it was.

The Voluntary Contribution for the forthcoming academic year has been maintained at €420; it's worth noting that this remains unchanged, as it has done now for more than 12 years. New parents may have already made this payment as their booking deposit for the school and there's no need to pay again. The Contribution can be made at ANY stage for next year, and last year a great many parents chose to pay it at this point, before back-to-school expenses kicked in.

On the other hand, if you prefer to wait, that's entirely up to you. In communications like this we need to explain compellingly just how important this source of revenue is to what goes on in the School, but we don't want to cause embarrassment to any family. You don't have to make the Contribution if you are unable to do so (and if you can only afford some of the figure, even this would be great!). Several years ago the School instituted a system that neither the Principal nor any other teacher knows who makes the Voluntary Contribution and who doesn't, so it certainly won't affect the treatment any child receives.

It suits the School best, and indeed suits many parents, if the Contribution is made by a monthly standing order. This spreads the cost over twelve payments of €35, making it easier for the donor, and also saving us from having to send out ongoing reminders to parents. Should you require a Standing Order form please contact the School Office.

### ***Parent Supervisors***

We are very grateful to parents who in recent years have given up their time to accompany school trips or to supervise at break and lunchtimes in school. Once again, we are making a special appeal for more parents who might be able to come in and help – at any stage. If you happen to have a spare hour available in the week it can be a rewarding experience, and makes an extraordinary difference to us. You will naturally fear that your presence around the school will mortify your child, but our experience is that the children of parent supervisors have got

used to it extremely quickly, and they really don't find it a big deal. Anyone willing to help out, should contact Ms Weir or Mr Petrie in the school. You will be greeted warmly!

### ***Absence Notes***

If possible, please write absence and late notes before the absence. In the case of unexpected absences or lateness, please give the note to the pupil immediately s/he returns to school. All notes regarding lates/absences should be handed to the Form Teacher and should explain the reason for absence/lateness.

### ***Punctuality***

As many of you are aware, the late detention system has been in operation for many years. Our focus has been to improve the time-keeping of our pupils and we believe that it has been successful in this. We will continue to operate the system next year and would continue to ask for your help and support in this matter. Any pupil who is late to school for any reason must sign the late book on his/her arrival. If the lateness is due to a medical appointment, a note explaining this should be handed in to the office staff. If a pupil is late for any other reason, he/ she must report to the teacher doing the late detention in Room 6 at 1.30. Reasons for lateness must be stated on any note written by a parent. We hope that all East Glendalough School students appreciate the importance of punctuality and don't expect this to be an issue.

### ***Wednesday Afternoons***

You are reminded that Wednesday is a half-day. Many students will stay in school for sports, study, music or drama, but if your child is not involved in these, their classes will finish at 1.20pm. The Bus Inspector is extremely helpful to East Glendalough School and does his best to facilitate us, but it's not always possible for him. Where all the students on a school bus are from EGS, the bus will leave at 1.30pm. Where there are students from other schools on a bus, it needs to wait for them and won't leave until 4pm.

We appreciate that this isn't a perfect system for parents, but it's the best we can do. If your child doesn't do extra-curricular activities and can't get home before 4pm, please let us know via the School Office at the start of term, and we will see what arrangements might be made.

### ***The Parents' Association***

All parents and guardians in East Glendalough School are automatically members of the Parents' Association. Every year a small committee is elected and arranges a number of low-key events. For example, this year we ran a Christmas Decoration Evening, catered for mulled wine and refreshments at the Carol Service, and ran a very

successful Cyber Safety Evening. The Parents' Association also co-ordinated the hugely successful annual Meitheal work-parties where parents came in and painted, cleaned and tidied up the School, inside and out.

This year, as it transpires, some members are retiring from the Parents' Association Committee, having reached the end of their term, so at the **AGM (early September: see calendar)** we will be looking for several more volunteers to join it. The term on the Committee is two years, so you won't be stuck there for life, and it really isn't a particularly onerous job – about six meetings a year and giving a hand at a couple of events is all it entails. Those who have been on the Committee will tell you that it's a hugely rewarding thing to do, so think about it over the summer and if you're interested, we'd love to hear from you!

The AGM is also a chance to suggest ideas and changes for the School and again you might use the summer to consider if there's anything you'd like aired. The nature of these things is that some suggestions will be implemented and some will be rejected, but the big thing is that you are MOST welcome to put your ideas forward.