

19th January 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At the most recent Steering Group meeting between Scoil Mhuire gan Smál and Claremorris B.N.S, it was decided that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document would be the best way of sharing information about the upcoming amalgamation. We hope that this document provides answers to some of your questions.

Any parents who do not have English as a first language or who may not be familiar with the Irish Education system and need further explanation can contact info@claremorrisns.ie or principal@claremorrisbns.com

General FAQs

What is an amalgamation?

An amalgamation is when two or more schools join together to create one new school.

Why is an amalgamation happening?

A survey was sent from both schools to the parents asking if they would be in support of a co-educational school and 90% of parents from both schools were in favour.

When is the amalgamation happening?

The amalgamated school is due to open in September 2024.

How will it work?

The new school will be made up of staff from the existing schools. It will operate from the two current campuses.

Who will run the new school?

The Principal will be appointed from the two current Principals and the Deputy Principal will be recruited from the two current Deputy Principals and the remaining principal. Permanent teaching, SNA and ancillary staff will remain the same. A manager will be appointed to run the school until a new Board of Management is elected and will arrange for the appointment of the new Principal in the near future. The recruitment of the Deputy Principal will take place in due course. Staffing levels are determined by Department circulars.

Parent FAQs

How will the amalgamation affect my child?

From September, all classes will be co-educational (a mix of boys and girls). They will be taught the same curriculum. The newly amalgamated school will benefit from the expertise of two staff teams combined as a single school, operating from two sites. A new Board of Management will be appointed in due course.

How will classes be organised?

This will be determined after further discussions and examination of the combined facilities.

What uniform will be worn?

In order to be cognisant of the financial burden on families, it was decided at a meeting of the Steering Group that a new uniform would be phased in over a two-year period. The students can wear the current uniforms of the schools when they return to school in September 2024. Further discussions will be held with the Steering Group regarding the uniform for the incoming Junior Infants.

What will the name of the new school be?

The Steering Group will get feedback from stakeholders when deciding on the new school name, crest, motto and mission statement. In the meantime, we will refer to the amalgamated school as Claremorris Primary School.

What will be the start and closing times?

This will be decided through consultation after the new Principal is recruited.

How will the amalgamation affect the formation of classes?

All classes will be fully co-educational in September 2024. For example, sixth class 2024 will comprise of two classes formed from the current fifth classes. Both classes will comprise of a mixture of boys and girls.

How will class sizes be impacted?

Teacher allocation in all primary schools in Ireland is based on the number of pupils enrolled in the school on 30th September of the previous year.

The number of teachers allocated to the amalgamated school in September 2024 will be based on the number of pupils enrolled in Scoil Mhuire gan Smál and the Claremorris B.N.S. on 30th September 2023 **combined**.

The document for the school year 2023/ 24 can be found in [Circular 0006/2023, Appendix A - Primary Staffing schedule tables](#). (Unless changes to the pupil-teacher ratio are introduced in the government budget, these figures remain the same for the following year.)

What will the lunch times be?

This will be decided after the new Principal is recruited in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

How will current book lists be impacted?

This will be decided after the new Principal is recruited in consultation with staff.

What will happen the Parents Association?

A new Parents Association will be formed for the new school.

Who will the secretary and caretaker be in September?

Current staff, Tara in Scoil Mhuire gan Smál and Katherine in Claremorris B.N.S (secretaries) and Barry (caretaker) will remain in situ. Discussions on their roles and the administration of the newly amalgamated school will be held in due course.

What do I do if I wish to enrol my child in September 2024?

Enrolment for Junior Infants September 2024 should be made through www.claremorrisns.ie.

Staff FAQs

How will current initiatives be impacted?

Both school Principals will review initiatives and programmes such as - Primary Maths Curriculum, SSE, JEP, Green Schools etc. For now, both schools will continue as they are but will also incorporate a view to the amalgamation as best they can. Management from both schools are collaborating to make the transition as smooth as possible.

What will be the online platform through which the schools connect?

Google and Aladdin - both schools will operate email, contacts, calendars, resources, planning through Google and continue to use Aladdin as normal around parental connections, absences etc. There will be one Aladdin account for the newly amalgamated school.

How will the amalgamation impact staffing arrangements?

<https://www.into.ie/help-advice/other-school-matters/amalgamation/staffing-in-amalgamated-schools/>

What will happen to the Boards of Management?

The existing Boards of Management remain responsible for the management of their own schools up to the 31st August 2024. A manager will be appointed by the Patron to organise the recruitment of the Principal and Deputy Principal and work with the Steering Group on planning etc. Co-operation between the Boards and the manager is expected throughout the amalgamation process.

Who are the Steering Group?

The Steering Group is made up of stakeholders from both schools.

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál: Peter Mc Callig (Chairperson), Grace Burke (Principal), Siobhán Walsh (Deputy Principal), Sophia Sheridan, Melissa Rilot, Loretta Connolly, Danny McHugh, Lorella Pienaar

Claremorris B.N.S: Colman Warde (Chairperson), Ciarán Murray (Principal), Orla Henry (Deputy Principal), Fr. Peter Gannon, Lisa Dillon, Brendan Walsh, Michelle Cosgrove, Carmel Mc Tighe

Discussions and planning for the amalgamation will continue with the Steering Group who are representatives of the stakeholders.

Any queries should be directed through the representatives of the Steering Committee.

A meeting of the Steering Group will be held in February to progress planning. A provisional date and time have been set for Thursday 22nd February at 7pm.