*Danu Community Special School*
*Blanchardstown Road North*
*Blanchardstown*
*Dublin 15 P38O*
*Roll Number: 20548N.*
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# Information for Parents of New Students for Academic Year 2026/2027

## Introduction

Welcome to Danu Community Special School (Danu CSS). We aim to provide a happy and safe learning environment for everyone who comes to our school each day. Our goal in Danu CSS is to assist each student to work to their potential and to teach them to be as confident and independent as possible when they leave our school. We aim to give the highest quality education to all our students. We work together as a staff team in partnership, being prepared, being punctual and being professional.

Our partners are our Parents/ Guardians, Stakeholders' group ASD 15 which assisted in setting up Danu CSS. We also work closely with Blanchardstown CDNT Avista, HSE, EWO, SENO and EWO. NEPS and NCSE are further supports to our students and families.

## Background of our Name 'Danu'

Danu is the most ancient of the Celtic gods. She was referred to as the mother of the Irish gods, which indicates that she was a mother goddess. Rivers are associated with her and represent fertility and abundance in the land. There is a suggestion that Danu might have dual characteristics, one being the beneficent, nurturing mother goddess, and another being the strong, malevolent side of the warrior goddess. The root "dan" in ancient Irish means art, skill, poetry, knowledge, and wisdom. She is seen as being a nurturing goddess, the teacher imparting wisdom, as well as the warrior goddess who does not give up.

## ETB Ethos and Core Values

Danu CSS is under the patronage of the DDLETB where we aim to provide high-quality education and supports to our students across the Dublin 15 region. ETB ethos and core values are outlined below.

All ETB schools are State, Co-educational, and Multi Denominational. ETB Ethos is underpinned by the core values of Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community.

### Core Value: Multi-Denominational

In an ETB school, multi-denominational is about welcoming and celebrating the full range of religions and beliefs in the school community. It is concerned with developing relationships that are respectful and appreciative of such difference, and interactions that embrace, celebrate, and explore such difference.

**Core Value: Excellence in Education**
The ETB school ethos establishes that excellence in education is underpinned by the core values of care, respect, community, and equality.

**Core Value: Care**
In an ETB school, care is about the welfare, wellbeing, and safety of all members of the school community. It is exemplified in meaningful relationships, connectedness, and empathy, alongside support and solidarity.

**Core Value: Respect**
In an ETB school, respect is about upholding the dignity, rights, and recognition of the identity and background of each member of the school community. It is exemplified in relationships between all members of the school community, and decision-making that impacts positively on the rights, feelings, and aspirations of the diversity of people within the school community.

**Core Value: Equality**
In an ETB school, equality is about treating all members of the school community equally and recognising and celebrating the diversity of these members. It is exemplified in targeting resources on those who have need and prioritising a culture of inclusion.

**Core Value: Community**
In an ETB school, community encompasses students, staff, parents, and the local community. It is about having shared vision, values and purpose, a sense of belonging, and a voice that is listened to. It is exemplified in productive collaboration, positive contributions, and effective communication across all members of the school community.

**Danu CSS Ethos & Vision**

Danu Community Special School (Danu CSS) is committed to a spirit of inclusion, equality, and partnership in education. The school actively seeks to promote an ethos to provide a safe, warm, welcoming, caring environment where all members of the school community are valued and treated with respect and dignity. We believe that students learn to the best of their ability when they feel happy and secure in school. The school seeks to develop a sense of community and partnership with children, parents, and staff. We believe that every member of the school community has an integral part to play in the overall wellbeing of the school.

Danu CSS is a caring learning environment where each child is welcomed, respected, cherished, and facilitated in reaching their full potential whatever their background, nationality, or faith.

Danu CSS is a learning community where children's learning is paramount. Staff, parents, and community members share in the educational development of the students in ways which are both stimulating and appropriate to the needs of the children in our school.

Danu CSS seeks to ensure that all members of the school community work in partnership, having the best interest of our students at heart and for the development of the whole community.

Please read Danu CSS Vision Statement (Appendix 1).

**Parents**

We recognise and value parents as the most important educators of their children and are always welcome to visit the school. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to meet with class teacher/ Principal via contacting the school office.

**Parent Association**

Danu CSS has a Parent Association (PA). All parents are automatic members of the PA. This is a vital link for our parents. Contact details for the PA are danucsspa@gmail.com.

**Communicating with Parents**

Teachers contact parents via Aladdin email, daily communication book or telephone call via school office. Parents can at any time request to meet with the class teacher and principal via contacting the office. If a teacher needs to contact a parent, they will inform the Principal/ Deputy Principal beforehand. The teacher will make a written record of verbal conversation/ or face to face meeting on Alladin.

**Aladdin**

Parents/ Guardians must sign up to the Alladin Connect App. This Alladin app is used to between home – school to communicate on a daily basis. Parents/guardians can contact teachers regarding attendance, questions, information and school notices. This app needs to be checked on a daily basis for any new school information that might arise and requires it to be communicated to parents/guardians.

**Student Absences**

Parents/guardians must inform the school if they are taking their child out of school early and must sign their child out in the book provided in the office.

Parents/guardian must inform teachers as to why their child is absent on a daily basis. This is a requirement and the Alladin app is used for this. Parents/guardians record this reason using Aladdin. In the event that a student is absent from school for 15 days or more the teacher will inform the Deputy Principal and parents will be contacted. In the event that a child is absent 20 days or more the EWO is notified.

**Student/ Parent/ Guardian Details**

Please ensure that the office has the most up to date student/parent/ guardian contact details.

**Uniform**

School uniform can be purchased from Leddy Uniforms, unit 10, 3 main street Blanchardstown, D15, contact detail 01 823 5466. It is a navy track suit with a white polo shirt. Students wear soft shoes indoors such as Crocs or slipper like shoes. We ask that you consider footwear/ Velcro footwear so that your child can independently be taught to put on their shoes.

**Transport**

Your child is entitled to school transport. Applications are made via NCSE SENO and the Department of Education through the school office. Once the school is notified that your child is on school transport, the school will notify you of a start date for the bus, the name of the bus escort, the name of the driver with a collection/drop off time given. However, please note that during your child's transitioning period into Danu cSS you will need to drop your child off and collect them as school transport may not be sanctioned by that time. ***Please note, that any student change of address- a new application for school transport must be made immediately.***

**Facilities**

During this academic year 2026/2027, Danu CSS is increasing from eight classroom to twelve. Classes are mixed in age group and are grouped depending on student ability, needs and learning styles. There are six students in each class with one teacher and minimum of three special needs assistants. There is one school office, one Deputy Principal office and one Principal office. There is a meeting room, and clinicians share the Deputy Principal office. Students have access to their own playground twice a day for yard breaks as per timetable.

**Class Names**

| **Class Names** |
|---|
| Daisy |
| Primrose |
| Willow |
| Apple H O B |
| Apple Seed |
| Oak |
| Juniper |
| Ash |
| Hawthorn |
| Birch |
| PE Classroom |

**Staff**

Principal: Pat Doolan (Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Child Safeguarding)

Deputy Principal: Elaine Cunnigham (Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP) for Child Safeguarding)

Secretary: Karen Sutton

Caretaker: Alan Thompson

Professional Support Team (PST): Pat & Elaine

In-School Leadership Team (ISLT): Pat, Elaine & Darragh

School Inspector: Stephanie Ormand

Chairperson of BOM: Paul Mc Evoy

DDLETB Director of Schools: Nichola Spokes

Behaviour Therapist: Noelle Leonard, Blanchardstown Children's Disability Network Team

Occupational Therapist: John Stephens, Blanchardstown Children's Disability Network Team

Speech and Language: Therapist: Suzanne Kirwan, Blanchardstown Children's Disability Network Team

**Curriculum, Planning and Preparation & Assessment**

We follow the DES NCCA Primary School Curriculum for Children (Curriculum Guidelines for Moderate/Severe& Profound Curriculum), the Primary Language Curriculum, Junior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1LP & L2LP) for students aged 13-16 years and Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1LP & L2LP) for students aged 16-18 years. Currently we are using, Senior Cycle, Junior Cycle, SPACE document, curriculum assessments and SSPs as part of academic assessments.

**Our School Day**

8.30am The school office opens from 8.30am to 3.30pm daily.

8.40am School starts for staff.

9am Student arrival. Most students come by bus. Some are dropped off/ collected by parents/ guardians.

9.20am Formal class Teaching begins.

The school operates a Healthy Eating Environment. Your child will be offered 2 breaks to eat daily. Parents/guardians are asked to send in a snack for the first snack break of 20 minutes. The school provides a cold food option from Glanmore for the second snack break. Parents/guardians are required to make those choices in advance.

2.35pm Students leave classroom to walk to bus. Students are picked up by parents/guardians.

2.40 pm School finishes for students. Buses go 2.40pm.

2.40pm Teacher finishes.

3.30pm Office closes.

**Timetable**

Each class has a whole class PECS/visual class timetable displayed in their room for teachers to model how each student should check their individualised visual schedules. These are suited to their individualised needs and displayed at eye level for their ease of access with their name and photograph displayed at their schedule. All students use FIRST THEN visuals for transitions, while some students use First/Then as a beginning stage of visual support. Student timetables incorporate times in the day when the student will have opportunity to voice their requests and make choices for their preferred items, sensory needs and movement breaks.

**Rules of Our School**

The school rules are as follows:

- Be a good friend.
- Be careful.
- Be gentle.
- Good listening
- Do your best.

**Policies and Procedures**

Key school policies include Code of Behaviour, Bi Cinéalta, Intimate and Personal Care, Healthy Eating, Acceptable Use Policy, Policy on Taking and Using Photographs of students in Danu CSS, Health and Illness Policy, Attendance Policy and Communication Policy. Parent Grievance policy is available on request from DDLETB. Relevant school policies are available on the school webpage www.danucss.ie. Please be familiar with these school policies.

**Feeling Unwell**

If a student is unwell and is unable to engage in teaching and learning, they should remain at home as per school policy. If a child is unwell in school, parents will be contacted and asked to collect their child immediately.

**Responding to Crisis Situations**

Students can bring a wide variety of behaviour to school and therefore limits must be set to make them feel safe and secure both in the classroom and as a whole school. Our Code of Behaviour Policy sets this out. Building a positive relationship with our students, gathering details of their preferences, and ensuring the class physical environment is organised and laid out to meet the students' needs will assist in promoting a positive school environment that supports learning and teaching.

We use the Studio III, low arousal principles and approach, with all our students. This approach relies on building positive relationships and knowing our students well and focusing on their specific needs. Some of our students may present with behaviours that concern. Proactive and reactive strategies outlined in all Students All About Me Plan's, are implemented by class staff

under the lead from the teacher in consultation with the Behaviour Therapist, Parents, and other professionals where necessary. For some of our students Wellbeing Plans are implemented under the lead of the teacher. These are reviewed regularly with the CDNT and parents.

Data is collected regarding incidents of student behaviours of concern. In Danu CSS, teachers identify the behaviour of concern using the St. John Of God Matrix. Both the teacher and SNAs gather and record accurate data using ABCs and Scatterplots school templates. These are evaluated during the daily morning meeting or at the end of the class day, led by the class teacher with the view to prevent/reduce the behaviour re-occurring. The teacher consults with the Behaviour Therapist when necessary.

**Incidents & Accident Reports**

Each student has All about me Profile. This includes information about what each child likes, dislikes, triggers, top 10 things to make their day are recorded along proactive and reactive strategies to support their learning opportunities. In the event that a student or staff member is involve sin an incident, injury or accident, these must be reported to the class teacher and Principla/Deputy Principal immediately. Parents/ guardians will be informed of a student head injury or incident on the day. Student incident reports are completed by staff members if there is an injury to staff member or student. These are completed within 24 hours were possible and returned to the Principal following a class team meeting on how to prevent the incident/accident occurring again. All student incident forms will be share with Parents/guardians via the Alladin app for confidentiality and security.

**CDNT Supports**

All Danu CSS students receive school support from the Blanchardstown AVISTA CDNT. Currently the CDNT provide a full-time Behavioural Therapist, two and half days per week of Occupational therapy and two full days of Speech and Language Therapy. For students with Dublin 15 address, these clinicians provide a wraparound service. That means that the clinicians will support the family, home and respite services after school hours and during school holidays.

**SSP's & End of Year Report**

Each student has an SSP that reflects their individual strengths and needs. The SSP covers the student's priority areas for learning. Parents are partners in the development of the SSP. SSP's are reviewed in the first term (October) and third term (April) in consultation with Parents and staff. By Mid-May, End of Year School Reports and SSP Reviews are completed and sent out to parents during the second week in June.

**Communicating with Students**

We fully appreciate how important it is for our students to be able to communicate with each other and staff. We encourage a whole communication approach. We use Augmentative and Alternative methods to communicate. These include objects of reference, ISL, Lámh, visual such as photographs, PECS, words, core boards, ACC devices as well as gesture, facial expressions, and spoken words.

**Intimate Care**

It is especially important that everyone feels as comfortable as possible during the school day. Many students require assistance with toileting and personal hygiene. Please refer to Intimate Care Policy.

**Communicating with Staff**

All staff members play a vital role in our students' education. We are professionals and we work together in a professional manner. Both Teachers, SNAs and Bus Escort roles and duties are set out by the Department of Education. In addition, Teachers follow the Code of Conduct set out by the Teaching Council. Our Dignity at Work policy is adhered to in our school community. As per DDLETB requirements, all staff have a Danu CSS email work account, and this is the email account that is used by the school regarding contacting staff to inform them of up-to-date housekeeping, training, etc. Each staff member has a pigeon-hole in the staffroom that should be checked daily. Staff also may be contacted via text message. Staff room notice boards: One is for daily formal school business such as duty rotas, daily messages etc and the other notice board is for Teachers and SNA notices as per DE, training opportunities, etc.

**Meetings with Teachers and Paren/Teacher Meetings**

All questions/queries should be directed to initially to the class teacher. Please understand that our teachers will do everything possible to meet with parents at a time that is mutually convenient but please note that during the class day, teachers have teaching duties which take absolute priority. Parents seeking to meet a teacher should, contact the school office to make an appointment.

**Class Outings & Walks**

Before embarking on going out for daily walk, weekly trip to the shop, trip out, swimming etc all students are risk assessed before they can leave the school campus.

**Parties**

We celebrate birthday parties in consultation with Parents. We would ask parents to send in some party food and cake. It is customary to invite the class next door to celebrate this social occasion.

**School Calendar**

A copy of school calendar is provided, and a copy is on the school web page. Feel free to contact the office should you need a hardcopy.

**First Aid**

Most of our SNA staff are trained in First Aid. There is one Defibrillator in our staffroom and one in Rathdara Community College Staffroom (the school attached to Danu CSS).

**Visitors**

All visitors must sign in and out of the visitors' book when the enter/exit the school.

**Summer Programme**

Danu CSS offered the summer programme for the first time this year. We plan to continue to offer this to students provided we can safely staff this.

**Readiness for School**

We ask parents to help prepare their child as they enter Danu CSS. Please see checklist of details that we ask parents/guardians to return prior to their child start in Danu CSS.

Any further queries or questions please contact the school office.

**Kind Regards**


Pat Doolan
*Principal*

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Appendix 1

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# Vision Statement

Background of our name 'Danu'

Danu is the most ancient of the Celtic gods. She was referred to as the mother of the Irish gods, which indicates that she was a mother goddess. Rivers are associated with her and represent the fertility and abundance in the land. There is a suggestion that Danu might have had dual characteristics, one being the beneficent, nurturing mother goddess, and another being the strong, malevolent side of the warrior goddess. The root "dan" in ancient Irish means art, skill, poetry, knowledge, and wisdom. She is seen as being a nurturing goddess, the teacher imparting wisdom, as well as the warrior goddess who does not give up.

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Our Patron is Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. (DDLETB). In its Statement of Strategy, 2017 — 2021. "Learn Achieve Succeed" the Board outlines five core values underpinning its statement:

1. Equality
2. Professionalism
3. Integrity
4. Collaboration
5. Innovation

The report further sets high level objectives under four strategic goals:

1. High quality and training programmes
2. High-quality experience for learners
3. Organisational and staff development
4. Effective communication and collaboration

These values and goals will guide Danu CSS in its remit to provide real, realistic, and relevant educational programmes to meet the needs of its pupils.

Danu CSS is a community based special school that provides an appropriate education for students aged between four- to eighteen-year-old with a wide range of disabilities and complex needs in the Dublin 15 area. In their remit, DDLETB, and its management and staff put the learner at the heart of everything they do. They will continuously strive to ensure that their work will be characterised by the operational values of equality, collaboration, professionalism, and integrity.

Forging meaningful relationships with the pupils, their parents and all involved in their care and education is essential to ensure high-quality education and experience for our learners. Effective communication, meaningful collaboration, openness, and transparency are critical in this regard.

Our school is a community school, a comfort zone, where everyone feels a sense of belonging, shares meaningfully, participates actively, and is accepted for what he/she is. That sense of community is continually fostered by generating a warm welcome, communal celebration and personal freedom, ever mindful of the dignity and respect accorded to our common humanity and giving choice and space to its learners in an inclusive, safe, learning environment.

In our school we want everybody — learners, carers, parents and teachers — to gain in confidence and self-esteem, through helping each other to reach their full potential, enjoying each other's successes, and allowing all to express themselves and feel heard. Students that are happy and content, supported by staff, and safe in the familiarity of their environs will blossom to reach their full potential and function in the community.

Their parents are central to all that we do. They are our students' first educators and so must be involved in all major decisions pertaining to their care and education. From the very initial meeting it is our objective to build a relationship of trust with parents, by listening and respecting their views, eliciting their necessary support in implementing our teaching programmes, and gaining their assistance in our task to educate their children. Our school is a support system for our parents, and we will be active listeners, acknowledging concerns and worries, welcoming suggestions, developing a team approach, and working together. We endeavour to work closely with parents and make them always feel at ease.

Danu CSS is fortunate, through its parents and stakeholders, to have in a very short space of time forged excellent relationships with the Patron, Management, Staff, Professional and Supportive Organisations, Clinical and Supportive Staff, and Government Agencies and Departments. This is an enormous tribute to the small but energetic group of stakeholders who have resolutely pursued in a sustained and unified way their dream for a much-needed special school for Dublin 15. It is essential that this group remain together not only to guide the beginnings of this exciting endeavour, but also to influence its direction and operations. Danu CSS values the importance of the connections made by this grouping and now more than ever wants its help in ensuring that together we move forward together with a common purpose rooted in what is only best — not second best — for our pupils. Danu CSS will continue to build on the relationships that the stakeholders have formed. Danu CSS will continue to be dependent on this grouping and the different agencies they represent. In thanking you, Danu CSS requests that you continue to assist us and give us your much appreciated direction as we head into the future.

Let us, as we move forward together promise to do our best, always striving to be professional, keeping the children at the centre of all we plan and do. Let us acknowledge that we all have much to learn and that we will help each other in our individual and collective journeys as we move forward to a promising future. This is the beginning of a unique journey. Let us hold hands and move forward urgently and yet gently, being professional and also compassionate, sensitive and kind at all times. Let us mind each other as we work as a part of a team, fortunate in the leadership that the Patron, Management and Principal provide and help them by ensuring that our dealings with them will be open, trusting, caring and honest at all times. We need as we move forward to look out for each other, be understanding, non-judgemental and have the ability to say "I am sorry' when, inevitably we will at times make some mistakes.

Most important of all, let us pledge to give each other hope as we embrace the challenges in the realisation that we now are no longer on our own.

Éamon O 'Murchu

23/09/2019