

Message from the Principal

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome to our school community. We are a Special School based in the heart of Slieverue. Jonah Special School aims to be a Centre of Excellence by ensuring the provision of child centred, evidence based education for students on the Autism Spectrum.

We endeavour to work collaboratively with parents, staff and the local community to provide a caring, positive and enriching learning environment where each individual is treated with dignity and respect. At Jonah Special School we are passionate about maintaining high standards of teaching and learning through on-going staff training.

The School provides an inclusive environment where all students develop an optimal personal level of independence, through an individualised approach to both educational and personal development. The school environment enables each student to live, learn and grow to his or her utmost potential.

We hope you enjoy your time with us and we instil in your child a love of learning and the growth of friendship and independence.

Ms. Caitríona Barry



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School Details

Principal: Caitriona Barry

Deputy Principal: Carol Deane

Clinical Director: Niamh McEvoy

Teacher: Claire Smith & Liezel Van Rooyen

Address: Jonah Special School, Old VEC Building, Slieverue, Kilkenny via Waterford, Co. Kilkenny, X91 D6DY.

Phone Number: (051) 833 269

Email: thejonahproject@hotmail.com

Website: www.jonahschool.ie

Facebook: Jonah Special School



School Policies

The following policies are available to view on our school website and are updated accordingly:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ★ Child Safeguarding Statement | ★ SEN Policy |
| ★ Admissions Policy | ★ RSE Policy |
| ★ Code of Behaviour Policy | ★ Substance Use Policy |
| ★ Anti-Bullying Policy (Bí Cineálta) | ★ Sickness Policy |
| ★ Attendance Policy | ★ Grievance Policy |
| ★ Critical Incident Policy | ★ Showering Policy |
| ★ Behaviour Support Policy | ★ Supervision Policy |
| ★ Physical Restraint Policy | ★ Work Experience and Work Placement Policy |
| ★ Health & Safety Policy | ★ Exceptional Closures Policy |
| ★ Intimate Care Policy | ★ Parent & Staff Communication Policy |
| ★ Toileting Policy | ★ Transition Policy |
| ★ Administration of Medication Policy | ★ Mobile Phone Policy |
| ★ Data Protection Policy | ★ Assessment & Reporting Policy |
| ★ Internet Acceptable Use Policy | |

Meet the team



Caitriona Barry
Principal

Carol Deane
Deputy Principal

Niamh McEvoy
Clinical Director

Claire Smith
Teacher

Liesel Van Rooyen
Teacher



Rachel Power
SNA

Miriam Kehoe
SNA

Yasmin Kirk
SNA

Ciara Laffan
SNA

Grace Mooney
SNA



Robbie Cody
SNA

Sue Foley
SNA

Gemma Levear
SNA

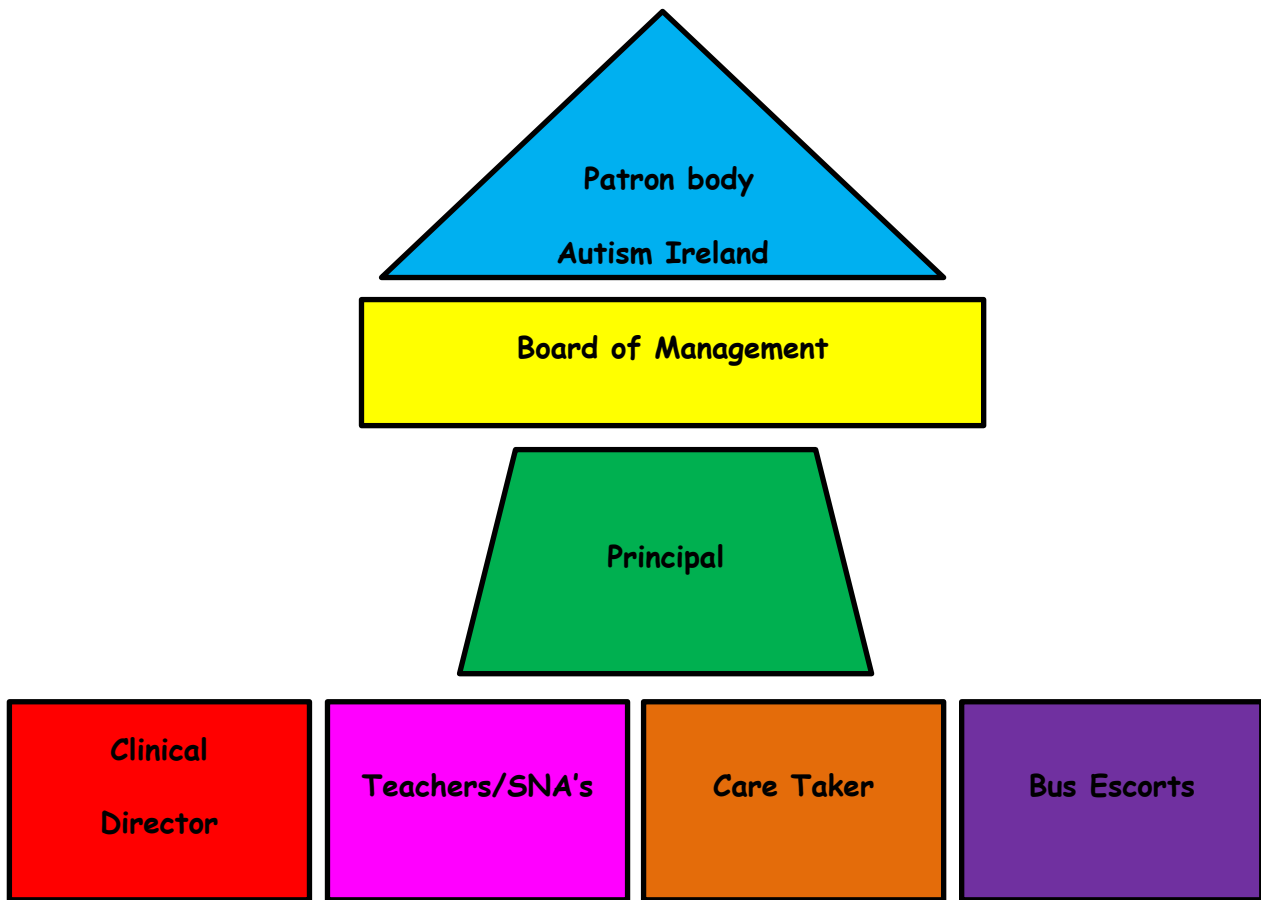
Ben Rochford
SNA



James Barry
Caretaker



Jonah Special School Staff Organisation Chart



Jonah Special School Board of Management

- ★ **Chairperson** - Seamus Phelan
- ★ **School Principal and Board Secretary** - Caitríona Barry
- ★ **Teacher Nominee** - Carol Deane
- ★ **Patron Nominee** - Fidelis Doherty
- ★ **Parent Nominee** - Elizabeth Von Engelbrechten
- ★ **Parent Nominee** - Michael Deans
- ★ **Community Representative** - Sinead Conneely
- ★ **Community Representative** - Jo Ryan

About Our School

Our History

Jonah Special School is one of 13 schools which were recognised by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011 as a Special School, established to educate students with Autism and Complex Needs. The school was originally set up in 2002 by a group of parents who felt their children deserved intensive individualised instruction to enable each student to reach their full potential. The school was funded as a pilot project for a number of years and received full recognition from the Department of Education in 2016.

Today

There are currently 12 students in Jonah Special School which caters for students from ages 4 - 18 years. Each child benefits from an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) which covers a wide variety of target areas inclusive of academic, social and daily living goals. In addition students have a Student Support File with strategies outlined as required. The goal of the school; is the building of skills for success at home, school and in the community.

Our Ethos

Jonah Special School provides an educational service for students with Autism and Complex Needs while utilising evidence based approaches. The ethos of Jonah Special School is that every student has a right to be valued as an individual, treated with dignity and respect, to be loved and cared for and be safe and protected from all abuse.

Our Facilities

The Department of Education and Skills have recently refurbished our existing school building to a much higher standard. Our facilities include -

- ★ Classrooms
- ★ Student toilet
- ★ Kitchen/Staffroom/Staff toilets
- ★ Principal/Clinical Director Office
- ★ Store room
- ★ Sensory rooms
- ★ Playgrounds
- ★ Large outdoor play area with sporting equipment.

General Information

School Times



The Board of Management, Principal and Staff, do not accept any responsibility for your child before 9.30am or after students have been dismissed at the above times.

School Services

The school services fee is €120 per child. This amount covers items being supplied to your child; photocopying, stationary, arts & crafts, curriculum resources etc. We ask parents to pay this before the end of September.

Security

Jonah Special School always strives to operate an open and welcoming policy; however, changing situations in society dictate that schools need to review security policies. The main outside doors are fitted with an electronic fob system. This will be in operation daily. All visitors must report to the Principal's office, identify themselves and state the purpose of their visit. We have also installed cameras in external areas.

Child Protection

Our intention is to provide a safe secure environment for all children in this school. The Board of Management of Jonah Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs has fully adopted and will implement without modification the Department of Education & Skills *Child Protection Procedures for Schools (revised 2025)*. The mandatory Stay Safe Programme has also been implemented. It is school policy to report alleged incidents of child neglect or abuse to Tusla. Parents will usually be informed if such a report is being made. The school does not investigate such allegations.

Dismissal of Children

1. Children will be escorted to their taxi by their Teacher/SNA. For those students who are collected by their parents/guardian, the child's Teacher/SNA will bring them to the playground gate of the school to meet you. **When parents/guardians fail to collect children at the appropriate time, children will remain in the entrance area.**
2. When it is necessary to collect a student during school hours, the parent/guardian should call personally to the Principal's office. Each child must be signed out by the person collecting them and back in if the child is returning to school. Any person collecting a child on behalf of the parent/guardian, must present written authorisation with telephone contact number, without this permission, children will not be released.
3. Where legal situations with regard to custody, access rights etc. exist, clear and unambiguous instructions should be presented in writing and parents advise the Principal immediately on enrolment. It is necessary for a copy of the relevant legal documentation to be provided.

Attendance

Emergency Closures/Information

In the event of school being closed due to emergency situations or unusual event you will receive a message on Aladdin. Up to date information will also be posted on our website www.jonahschool.ie and our Facebook Page. Please make sure we have up to date contact details.

Absences

All absences should be explained by email, Aladdin message or phone call to the school as soon as you know your child will be absent. For anticipated longer absences, please contact the Principal.

Education Welfare Act 2000

Please note that each child is obliged to attend school every day on which the school is in operation, unless there is a valid reason for not doing so. The school is obliged to notify the Attendance Officer -

- ★ When there is a pattern of irregular attendance,
- ★ A combined total absence of 20 days.

Curriculum

Starting Out

Starting a new school is a huge milestone in the life of every child or young person. As well as being very exciting it can often be a time of anxiety. To ensure your child transitions at ease, our Principal, Caitríona Barry and Clinical Director, Niamh McEvoy, will schedule a home visit and/or visit to the child's previous educational setting. This visit will help ensure that the school can adequately meet the needs of your child and will inform a transition plan for your child into the school.

A transition plan will typically include -

- ★ Details of assessments and reports
- ★ Medical information
- ★ Dietary requirements
- ★ Child's likes/dislikes
- ★ Child's strengths and areas of need
- ★ Proposed time frame for transition

The child will begin on a reduced day. As the child becomes more settled we incrementally build up the time the child spends in school.

Jonah Special School uses a Neurodiversity Affirming approach to the teaching and learning of students with Autism. The principles underpinning our approach include -

- ★ Rights based
- ★ Student Voice
- ★ Regulation First
- ★ Universal Design for Learning
- ★ Unconditional Positive Regard
- ★ Solution Focused
- ★ Staff and Student Wellbeing

In Jonah Special School we strive to provide a high standard of teaching and learning within a positive and enriching learning environment.

We use the Primary Curriculum guidelines for teachers and Junior Cycle, Level 1 & 2, when planning for your child's academic goals. We also use Aistear which is the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and is the national curriculum to support children from birth to 7 years.

Each child will have an Individualised Education Programme which will be specific to their needs. The curriculum is divided into five categories;

- ★ Language
- ★ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education
- ★ Wellbeing
- ★ Arts Education
- ★ Social and Environmental Education

Homework

Jonah Special School does not enforce a homework policy as the current evidence base worldwide does not support the practice. Individual homework arrangements may be put in place where necessary and appropriate. Students in Jonah Special School benefit from multiple curricular programmes including The Primary School Curriculum, Aistear, ABBLs-R, AFLS, and Junior Cycle.

Community Inclusion

Jonah Special School values community inclusion and recognises the importance for our students to have opportunities to actively participate in the local community. Each student's IEP will have appropriate community inclusion goals for their particular needs and stage of development.

The bulk of the available research would seem to strongly indicate that students who participate in any form of extra-curricular activities benefit from enhanced status amongst peers, a wider social network, and an early understanding of several crucial 'life skills'.

The potential self-esteem gains to be made from these outcomes can lead to improvements in other areas and can in many cases act as a deterrent to poor behaviour. These effects are particularly important in 'at-risk' students who may struggle to gain similar benefits in class as a result of low academic ability, poor social skills, or physical restrictions.



School Rules

Jonah Special School community comprises of parents, students, staff and others. All have a responsibility to contribute appropriately to the total educational process. The

following school rules are based on personal respect and their goal is the wellbeing of all.

1. **USE THE HANDOVER POINT** - Parents are asked to leave their children at the designated handover point and to wait at this point at home time.
2. **BE ON TIME** - We ask that parents be on time when dropping off and collecting their children from school. All children should be in school by 9.30 am, and are to be offsite by their stated collection time. All students must be off the premises by 3.00 pm.
3. **DO OUR BEST** - Jonah Special School will endeavor to inform parents in advance of any long term change in staffing. It should be recognized that on some occasions this will not be feasible.
4. **DO YOUR BEST** - If a parent will not be collecting their own child for any reason the school will need prior written notice of who is collecting the child. If you are running late in respect of either drop off or pick up, please ring the school to inform us.
5. **BE RESPONSIBLE** - Any student noticeably sick or ill should not be sent to school (and any child who vomits or has diarrhea in school will have to remain out of school until they are 48 hours symptom free).
6. **BE CONCISE** - To facilitate a smooth transition of children between home and school handover, time and noise level in the reception area should be kept to a minimum. Again, parents must be aware that failure to keep handover times short has a severe impact upon the educational process for all students.
7. **BE COMMUNICATIVE** - We will be grateful if parents would inform the school of any changes in -
 - ★ Medication, dietary supplementation or diet generally.
 - ★ The home situation, e.g. parent on holidays, visitors etc.
8. **USE GOOD JUDGEMENT** - All programmes are confidential and therefore it is inappropriate to ask staff about another student's progress in any way other than a comment about general well-being. It is also inappropriate to ask about an absent staff member or speculate on possible reasons for absences or to contact absent staff members.
9. **BE RESPECTFUL** -
 - ★ Parents are asked to refrain from going into the staff room at all times, as this is the only area where staff can have some down time.
 - ★ Parents should not enter the classrooms, or external school buildings without the prior permission of the School Principal.
 - ★ Jonah Special School requests that parents use a respectful and professional manner in all their dealings with staff and to refrain from the use of profanity or from use of physical contact or force when meeting with school personnel. Meetings will be terminated if parents are not behaving respectfully. Repeated incidents of disrespect may require investigation and sanction from the Board of Management.

- ★ Jonah Special School staff will endeavor to always behave towards parents in a respectful and professional manner during all school - parent interactions.

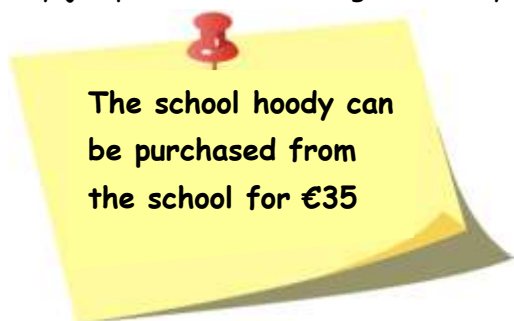
10. USE SCHOOL STRUCTURES -

- ★ Parents should seek permission from the School Principal before accessing any area of the school or external buildings other than the reception area.
- ★ Any concerns regarding your child's educational programme should be directed through the Teacher for educational matters and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- ★ Any questions you wish to ask regarding the general running of the classroom, meal times, day to day events etc. should be sent via email or Aladdin message.
- ★ It is not appropriate to contact school staff on their personal mobile phones or via social media and staff are informed not to respond to such contact. ***The only exception to this is letting the bus escort know (by text) if a child will not be on transport for any reason, or letting the Principal know (by phone, Aladdin or email) that a student will not be in school on a particular day.***
- ★ Any concerns regarding staff should be directed through the Principal and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- ★ Whilst in the classroom or on community outings, it should be noted that Jonah Special School staff have full responsibility for the student.

Parents Information

School Uniform

Jonah Special School does not enforce a school uniform policy. However, if parents choose to avail of the school uniform, children are required to wear blue or red polo-shirt, navy jumper with Jonah logo and navy trousers/tracksuit bottoms.



Appointments with Principal

In general, all communications should be in the first instance with the Teacher for issues of an educational nature. It is necessary to **make an appointment** with the Principal through the school email or telephone.

Emergency Contact

It is very important that the school have on file: **the name, address and telephone number of a person or persons who may be contacted**, should the parents be unavailable, to take responsibility for your child in the event of an emergency closure, sickness, accident etc. Should this emergency contact change at any time, **it is essential** that you notify the school immediately in writing.

Collection of Students

If your child does not avail of school transport, we ask you to please collect your child promptly at the designated times as unnecessary anxiety can be caused by failure to do so. Late collection is also disruptive of teacher preparation time and planning.

School Transport

Transport to and from school is approved by the NCSE and School Transport section of the DOE. Escorting is provided by external bus escorts employed by Jonah Special School BOM. Bus Éireann provide the transport, concerns arising from transport must be directed via Bus Éireann or Department of Education School Transport.

Items to be provided by Parents

We ask parents to take care to ensure their child's belongings, particularly that clothing items are clearly labelled, this helps staff to identify and locate items if they

are missing and ensure children's items are not mixed up. The school takes no responsibility for any danger or loss of items brought to the school.

Spare Clothes

We recommend that all parents at the start of the year regardless of your child's needs send in the following items-

- ★ Spare change of clothes in case of spillages or accidents - if your child is toilet training we recommend several pairs (at least 5 per day).
- ★ Spare large shirt or t-shirt for arts and crafts or messy play to protect their clothing
- ★ During the winter months a pair of wellies or spare shoes and wet gear.
- ★ A wallet/purse with a few coins (no more than €5) and a list of what your child is allowed to purchase - the Teacher will let you know the days of outings, however we do like to incorporate community visits and trips to the shop to teach functional living skills.

Toileting/Intimate Care

Any students with toileting needs must ensure that the school has a sufficient supply of nappies, wipes, clothes etc. A note will be sent on Aladdin when supplies are running low.



Lunches/Snacks

We are currently part of the school meals programme and as part of this your child can avail of a wrap or a sandwich with a snack daily. Parents can provide pre-packed snacks and lunches for their children if they do not wish to use the school meals programme. We do not have access to a full kitchen. As such your child's lunch must be prepared at home ready for them to eat at snack and lunch times. Your child will need their own cutlery and juice bottle/ drink.

Reinforcers

Some students may have particular toys/items which they work for across the day as part of their individual plan. It is up to the parent to ensure that these are sent into school. An Aladdin message will be sent when these items need to be replenished.



Communication Devices

If your child uses any additional device or tools to assist them in their communication it is essential that this travels with them at all times. Many of our students use PEC's

(Picture Exchange Communication System) or digital devices (e.g. iPads) to assist in their communication. It is important for consistency purposes that we are using the same methods at school and at home and that these aids travel to and from school each day. Some students may have their own personal devices their parents wish to use. It is the parents/guardian's responsibility to ensure that these devices are appropriately insured as the school will not accept responsibility for any loss or damage.

Approved Medication & Medication Permission Form



Please refer to Administration of Medication Policy for further information.

If your child gets sick or injured during the school day you will be contacted to collect them. Please ensure you have given the school at least **2 emergency contact numbers** in case we have difficulty reaching you.

Information/Communication

All information/communication forwarded to the school should be in an envelope showing the student's name and Teacher with some reference on enclosed material. All communication with your child's Teacher should be through Aladdin or school email. If you wish to discuss a matter with your child's Teacher, a note requesting a discussion time should be sent to the Teacher in advance. The Teacher will then set up an appointment time that will aim to suit both parents and Teacher alike.

If, in exceptional circumstances, it is necessary to seek a discussion during class time, we ask that the interruption would be kept to the minimum time required to discuss the matter.

Formal Parent - Teacher meetings are held in October (IEP Meeting) unless otherwise notified. Full details are issued directly from the Teacher prior to the meetings.

Confidentiality

It is very important to the Board of Management, as representatives of all parties in Jonah Special School that the confidentiality of each child, family and all staff members is respected at all times. In order to ensure this, Jonah Special School asks parents and staff to consider a number of items -

- ★ All students' programmes are confidential so parents are asked to refrain from enquiring about the specifics of any other students programme or progress.
- ★ All staff are subject to a confidentiality agreement and should not be asked questions regarding other students in the school or should not be asked questions in relation to your child outside school hours. This is to protect your

child, and others, within the school.

With respect to each student's right to confidentiality, Jonah Special School will seek parental permission before -

- ★ Their child's image to be used in any published or televised material.
- ★ Videotaped programme material collected on their child is sent home for information purposes e.g. food programme/life skills tasks.

Parents have the right to refuse permission for any of the above.

Medical Information

Immunisation/Infectious Diseases

An effective immunisation programme can greatly reduce time lost through absences and we suggest that you consult your doctor concerning protection against the more common childhood diseases. If your child contracts an infection or disease, you should have the condition treated immediately and exclude the child from school as advised by your G.P. In the case of highly infectious diseases, a phone call to the school would be appreciated to enable us to inform parents of other children in your child's class.

Gastroenteritis is highly infectious and can spread rapidly across the school. We ask that children are kept at home until **48 hours** after the last episode of vomiting/diarrhoea.

Medical Conditions/Allergies

If your child has or develops a serious medical condition or allergy, please inform the Principal, where details of the condition will be recorded and necessary personnel will be informed.

Prescribed Medication

Please refer to Administration of Medication Policy for further information.

Head Lice

We would ask you to be vigilant in checking your child's hair regularly for outbreaks of head lice. This is a common problem among children and can be caught by anyone where people work and play together. If your child has head lice take immediate action to treat infestation. The child should be excluded from school for the duration of the period recommended for treatment. Please inform the Principal if your child has been infected by head lice.

HSE Forms - Hearing/Sight/Immunisation/Dentist etc.

Every year the school facilitates the HSE by distributing forms for completion. It is important that these forms are completed and sent back to the school immediately. All consent and participation is voluntary.

Please check the school website, www.jonahschool.ie, for regular updates and information and the school calendar.

Separated/Divorced Parents Information

- ★ The staff of Jonah Special School encourages parents experiencing separation to come and speak to the School Principal. It is our aim to handle such matters with sensitivity and compassion, and ultimately, our primary concern is for the wellbeing and overall development of the child.
- ★ When a child spends time in two homes, it is requested that the school be provided with both sets of emergency/contact numbers.
- ★ Regarding the collection of children from school, it is requested that the school be informed of any changes in collection arrangements by Aladdin, email or note.
- ★ It is not assumed that when we wish to communicate with parents that they will communicate to each other. As such we will copy all communication to both parents. However, we would ask that one parent would be the primary point of contact if illness occurs during school hours.
- ★ Given the nature of the school (in terms of demand for services/waiting lists etc.) all changes to a student's enrolment will need to be agreed by both parents.
- ★ Regarding notes/weekly summaries etc. it is assumed that the parent with whom the child normally resides will keep the other parent informed.
- ★ With regard to IEP meetings with school staff, it is assumed that both parents can participate in such meetings together.
- ★ In the absence of a custody arrangement, both parents will be treated equal partners in terms of rights and responsibilities.
- ★ The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent in the absence of a custody arrangement.
- ★ The staff of Jonah Special School will endeavor at all times to deal with sensitively and caringly with children experiencing separation.

Additional Information

Details of Records Kept for Each Child

Information Held	Purpose	Shared with
<p>Enrolment Information</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Name address and contact details, PPS number ★ Names and addresses of parents/guardians and their contact details ★ Any relevant special conditions (e.g. special educational needs, health issues etc.) which may apply 	<p>To enable each student to develop his/her full potential</p> <p>To comply with legislative and administrative requirements</p> <p>To ensure that eligible students can benefit from the relevant additional teaching or financial supports</p>	<p>Department of Education and Skills, NCSE, HSE and other agencies when required by legislation to do so.</p>
<p><u>With consent</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Religious belief ★ Racial, ethnic or national origin ★ Membership of the Traveller community, where relevant 	<p>To enable parent/guardians to be contacted in the case of emergency.</p>	
<p>Information on previous academic record</p>	<p>To enable each student to develop his/her full potential.</p>	<p>Class teachers and Clinical director where appropriate.</p>
<p>Psychological assessments, clinical reports and referrals</p>	<p>To enable each student to develop his/her full potential</p> <p>To comply with legislative and administrative requirements</p>	<p>NCSE, NEPS, HSE and other agencies when required by legislation to do so.</p>

Attendance Records	To enable each student to develop his/her full potential To comply with legislative and administrative requirements	Department of Education and Skills, TUSLA, HSE as per legislation requirements.
Academic record - Student Support File	To enable each student to develop his/her full potential	Class teachers when transferring from class to class, clinical director where relevant.
Child Protection Records	To comply with legislative and administrative Requirements	HSE, TUSLA, mandatory by law
Other records e.g. records of any serious injuries/accidents etc.	To comply with legislative and administrative requirements	Insurance, Department of Education and Skills, NCSE, HSE and other agencies when required by legislation to do so.
Behavioral data where a student is displaying a behavior of concern	To enable each student to develop his/her full potential To comply with legislative or administrative requirements To ensure that eligible students can benefit from the relevant additional teaching supports where required.	NCSE, NEPS, HSE and other agencies when required by legislation to do so.
Photos and recordings of students engaging in school events and activities	To monitor student progress For display around the school, in school newsletters On school website www.jonahschool.ie /Facebook (with consent only)	Not shared externally or on school website without express consent from parents.