



Information for parents of infants starting school

2024-2025

***Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste.***

Starting school will be the first big change in the life of your child. Up to this he/she has felt safe and secure with you in the home and family but now he/she is facing the wider world of classroom and school. This may seem a big step for someone so small but most children manage it without any great fuss or stress – and in fact take to it like ducks to water.

However, it is also a time when parents and teachers should take special care to ensure that the transition from home to school is as smooth as possible. If the child’s first experience of school is one of happy involvement, a very good foundation will have been laid for fruitful school years ahead.

It is important too, particularly during the first year that parents understand what the aims of the school are, as many may be expecting too much in the way of academic achievement.

We know from experience that parents are very anxious to help in any way possible. We have, therefore, included some ideas for the home, which should stimulate the child’s interest and nurture his/her desire to know more.

Children are natural learners. They have an in-built curiosity and an eagerness to know more about everything – about themselves, about others and about the world around them. And they learn fast – but only when they are ready and their interest is aroused. Children come to us when they are so young, we must guard against putting pressure on them to learn what they are not yet ready for. Demanding too much too soon can switch a child off completely. At the same time we must cultivate readiness so that they can get moving as soon as possible.

The **rates of progress of children can vary greatly.** We try to give them an opportunity to move ahead at their own pace or as near to it as possible.



Our first year in school therefore, is mainly about settling in, relating to others, making friends, feeling happy and gradually getting used to the routine of the school.

On the learning side the emphasis is on getting children ready for learning by:

* Developing their **oral language** and expression.
* **Sharpening their senses,** especially seeing, hearing and touching.



* Developing **physical co-ordination** especially of hand and fingers.
* Extending their **concentration span** and getting them to **listen attentively**.
* Learning through **play** – the most enjoyable and effective way (The Aistear programme)
* **Co-operating** with the teacher and other children.
* Performing **tasks by themselves.**
* **Working with others.**
* **Sharing with others.**
* Getting each child to accept the **general order**, which is necessary for the class to work well.

**Before coming to school....**

**(During the summer holidays)**

Please ensure your child **is as independent as possible** – physically, emotionally

and socially. If she can look after himself/herself in these areas he/she will feel secure and confident and settle in readily.

They should be

* able to Wash their hands thoroughly as per advice given by HSO
* able to understand the need to distance themselves from others
* able to **button and unbutton or zip and unzip their coat** and hang it up.

 

* able to **use the toilet without help.**
* be aware of **personal hygiene** and cleanliness. (Your child should know to flush the toilet and wash their hands, without having to be told.)
* able to use their **handkerchief** when necessary.
* able to “take turns”.
* able to **tidy up** and put away their playthings.

**The First day.....**

The child’s first day at school is a day to remember for the rest of their life. You can help to make it a really happy one for them.

Please provide your child with:



1. A school bag that is **easily opened** and **closed.**  School bags should

 be **big enough to fit an A4 size book without bending.**

1. Lunch box and drink container that is easily opened and closed. Lunch to coincide with our healthy eating and litter reduction recommendations. We encourage pupils to bring a sandwich, a piece of fruit, a snack and a drink in a lunch box and drink container (no glass bottles please). Remember for the first 2 weeks, children will only be here for small break. *See Healthy Eating Policy*
2. Adult size t-shirt to use as an apron for art and craft classes.



1. Everything else, will be provided by the teacher.



But normally, school opens at 9.10am and theteacher will be in the class to receive the children from 9:20. This gives your child time to settle in before class starts at 9.30.

**Junior Infants go home at 12:00pm for the first two weeks in September and at 2:00pm following that.**

It is important to chat to your child about their day, who did he/she sit beside, who did he/she play with at school and to ensure he/she isn’t alone. Children like to have a ‘best friend’ but do encourage mixing rather than being dependent on one friend only. **Rough behaviour is totally discouraged at all times.**

**When they’ve started....**

**(Or before!)**

Making letters on paper is not easy for the small child. She/he must learn to hold the pencil properly and make regular shapes. Her/his hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage.

**You Can Help...**

She/he must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get him/her manipulating toys like:



* Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc.
* Plasticine/Playdough to make her/his own shapes.
* A colouring book and thick crayons.
* Sheets of paper that he/she can cut up with a safe scissors.

When he/she begins to use a pencil make sure that he/she holds it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change him/her later.

She/he may be making upper case letters at home even before he/she comes to school. This is fine. But when he/she starts making lower case letters at school you should try to get him/her to discontinue the upper case and practise his/her new system whenever he/she feels like it. If in doubt consult the teacher.

Something’s wrong!

Don’t discourage left-handedness. If that is his/her definite natural inclination, don’t attempt to change him/her.



Developing her command of spoken language

It is important that the child’s ability to talk is as advanced as possible. It is through speech that he/she communicates his/her thoughts and feelings, his/her needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If he/she cannot express these in words he/she will tend to remain silent and will often withdraw from the learning activity of the class. This can be the first sign of failure in the school system and must be remedied, if at all possible. That is why a lot of attention is given to language development in the first years of school.

**You Can Help ...**

Talk to your child naturally and casually about things of interest that you or he/she may be doing-at home, in the shop, in the car, etc. Remember that all the time

he/she is absorbing the language they hear about them. It takes him/her a while to make it his/her own and to use it for his/her own needs.

* Try to make time to listen when he/she wants to tell you something that is important to her. But don’t always make him/her the centre of attention.
* Answer his/her genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture his/her sense of curiosity and wonder.
* Introduce him/her gently to the ideas of Why? How? When? Where? If? etc. These demand more advanced language structures.



**Starting reading**

He/she will have their own particular favourite stories that they never tire of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get him/her to tell them to you.

Ability to read is the foundation for all future progress in our school system. However, learning to read is a gradual process and a lot of preparatory work must be done before a child is introduced to their first reader.

We very deliberately do not rush or push children into reading. We get them ready for it over an extended period. Reading is something to be enjoyed. It should never start as a chore for the small child.

**You Can Help...**

* Have attractive colourful books in the home.
* Read him/her a variety of stories from time to time. Child will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
* Fairy tales and nursery rhymes are particularly important as a great deal of oral language and early learning activities are based on them.
* Read nursery rhymes. Children will learn them off their own bat. Above all, don’t push them with early reading. You may turn them against it for evermore.
* Look at the pictures with your child and talk to them about what they say.
* Remember that the teacher is the best judge of what rate of progress is best suited to each child.
* You must convey to him/her gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.



**Maths**

Maths for the small child has nothing to do with “sums” or figures or tables or adding and subtracting. These will all come much later. Maths is really part of the language used in understanding and talking about certain things in their daily experience e.g. Children associate certain numbers with particular things – two hands, four wheels, five fingers etc.

* Counting – one, two, three, four, etc.
* Colours – black, white, red, green, etc.
* Prepositions (telling position) and their opposites: over/under, before/after, inside/outside etc.
* Matching/Sorting – objects of the same size/colour/texture/shape etc.
* Odd One Out – difference in size/colour etc. Understanding of these concepts comes very quickly for some children. For others it takes a long time. Be patient. You cannot force Maths understanding on a child.

**But You Can Help...**

In the course of your ordinary daily routine in the home, in the shop, in the neighbourhood

* you should use suitable opportunities to casually introduce the maths vocabulary referred to above e.g. How many cakes? The glass is full/empty. We turn left at the lights.
* The child gets to understand Maths best by handling and investigating and using real objects. This has been his/her natural method of learning since he/she was a baby. This at times can be a nuisance but if it allows him/her to do the learning themselves and the final result is well worth it.



**Gaeilge**

All children enjoy learning another language besides their own language. They have no difficulty in picking it up because it fascinates them as another code of communication.

They are free of any hang-ups about Irish unless they become aware that the home attitude towards it is not good.

**So please be careful that anything you say does not give a negative attitude to your child.**

Please give your little one as much encouragement and help to acquire Irish as you can. If they learn new words in school encourage them to use them at home.

**Easy Does it….**

There are lots of ideas and suggestions as to how you can help your child. **We are not advocating that you do ALL of these with him/her in a systematic way.** But if you find from time to time that he/she enjoys a fun approach to certain aspects of learning then we would say – give it a go – but remember **don’t overdo it!**

**This is only a guide, it is not definitive!!**

**See NCCA website for further information/suggestions.**