

tise their new system whenever they feel like it. Consult the teacher about this.

- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is your child's definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change him/her.

Other areas of the curriculum

The child in Junior Infants learns a lot through many other activities, which do not need any elaboration here. His/her general development is enhanced through Art & Craft, P.E, Music, Nature and of course through Religious Education. In regard to the last area, its moral and social aspects are covered right through the school day, e.g, kindness to others, sharing with them, saying we are sorry, being aware of God through the beauty of nature etc.

The children learn their prayers and Bible stories gradually. Again, as in the other areas we referred to already, the child will benefit from practising at home what he/she has learned at school. He she can then make his/her own contribution to the usual family prayers.

Social skills are very important. We encourage good manners at all times, please/thank you, addressing teachers properly, being courteous to fellow students and teachers. It is important to ask you child who he/she played with at school and to ensure he/she isn't alone. Also encourage mixing rather than being dependent on one friend only. **Rough behaviour is totally discouraged in the playground.** You will find a list of school rules and policies in the School Code of Behaviour.



Information Booklet



for
Parents of Infants
Starting School

Forward

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 of 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.

With these aims in mind, we have put together this little booklet as a general guide for parents. It deals briefly with the period before your child comes to school and his/her introductory stage in Junior Infants.

We trust you will find it helpful and that your child will be happy and fulfilled with us.

introduce the maths vocabulary referred to above. E.g. How many cakes?, The glass is full/empty. We turn left at the lights...

- Children get to understand Maths best by handling, investigating and using real objects. This has been their natural method of learning since they were babies. This, at times, can be a nuisance, but if it allows them to do the learning themselves, 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 mode 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.

We would want parents to give every encouragement and help to the small ones in their efforts to acquire Irish. If they learn new words in school, encourage them to use them at home. Use little Irish phrases or words now and again. Children are delighted to find out that their parents are into their new language as well. If they must learn Irish, let them enjoy it and master it to the best of their ability.

Getting Ready for Writing

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

You can help...

- Your child must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get them manipulating toys like jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread, Plasticene to make their own shapes, a colouring book and thick crayons or paper that can be cut up with safe scissors.
- When they begin to use a pencil, make sure that they hold it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change later.
- They may be making block letters at home even before they come to school. This is fine. But when they start making lower case letters at school, you should try to get them to discontinue the blocks and prac-

Getting Ready for Learning



You can help...

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read them a variety of stories from time to time. They will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- You must convey to your child gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.
- Look at the pictures with them and talk about what they say.
- Read nursery rhymes. They will learn them off their own bat. Don't try to push them.
- Above all, don't push your child with early reading. You may turn them against it for evermore.
- Remember that the teacher is the best judge of what rate of progress is best suited to each child.
- Sing the alphabet song with your child, so that he/she has at least heard of the letters. If he/she knows what each one looks like, all the better.

Understanding Maths

First, a word of warning!

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 they use in understanding and talking about certain things in their daily experience e.g.

- They associate certain numbers with particular things—two hands, four wheels, five fingers...
- 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 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

Children are natural learners. They have an inbuilt 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.

Because they come to us 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

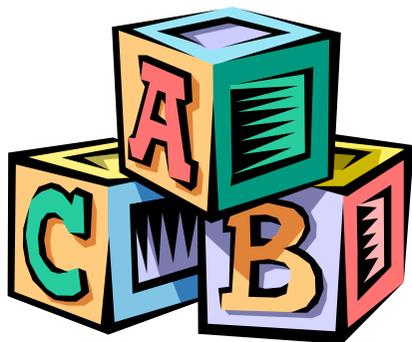
- Developing their **oral language** and expression.
- **Sharpening their senses**, especially seeing, hearing and touching.
- Developing **physical co-ordination** especially of hand and fingers.
- Extending their **concentration span** and getting them to listen attentively.
- Learning through **play**—the most enjoyable and effective way.
- **Co-operating** with the teacher and other children.
- Performing **tasks by themselves**.
- **Working with others** and sharing with them.
- Getting each child to **accept the general order**, which is necessary for the class to work well.

Before your child starts...

You should ensure that your child is **as independent as possible**—physically, emotionally and socially. If he/she can look after themselves in these areas he/she will feel secure and confident and settle in readily.

It would help greatly if he/she is able to-

- **Button and unbutton his/her coat** and hang it up.
- **Use the toilet without help** and manage pants buttons.
- Also **encourage personal hygiene** and cleanliness. Your child should know to flush the toilet and wash his/her hands, without having to be told.
- Use his/her hanky when necessary.
- **Share** toys and playthings with others and "take turns".
- **Tidy up** and put away his/her playthings.
- Remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If he/she had this experience, then separation from his/her parents when they start school will not cause any great anxiety.



Some Important Areas of Early Learning.

Developing your child's 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... Remember that all the time he/she is absorbing the language they hear about them. It takes them a while to make it his/her own and to use it for his/her own needs.
- Try to make time to listen when they want to tell you something that is important to them. But don't always make them the centre of attention.
- Answer his/her genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture their sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Introduce them gently to the ideas of Why? How? When? Where? If?... These demand more advanced language structures.
- Your child will have their own particular favourite stories that they never tire of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get them to tell them to you.

First Step in Reading

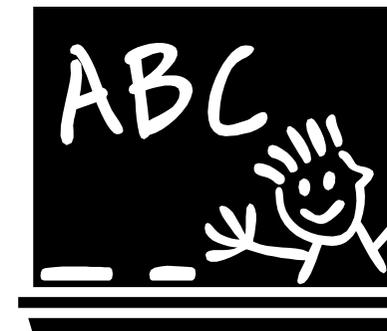
Ability to read is the foundation for all future progress in our school system. However, learning to read is a gradual process and a lot of preparatory work must be done before a child is introduced to their first reader. We very deliberately do not rush or push children into reading. We get them ready for it over an extended period. Reading is something to be enjoyed. It should never start as a chore for the small child..

- Children often “forget” or relay messages incorrectly, so please, **check your child’s bag each night for notes.**
- You will receive a book list outlining the books and other bits and pieces your child will need for the year. We would appreciate if the money for the Art and Crafts and the money for photocopying were paid at the date indicated on the booklist. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings, but they are optional. These include school photographs and school outings. Further details will be given during the year.
- There is a tradition in the school of helping children less fortunate than ourselves. We are involved in the Operation Christmas Shoebox appeal which operates during November and with the Bother appeal which we run during the spring.

Preparing for the Big Day.

A 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.**

- **Tell your child about school** beforehand, casually and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome and he/she will meet new friends.
- **Don’t use school or the teacher as a threat.** “If you behave like that for teacher she’ll murder you” though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.
- If you feel it would help, you could take your child for a stroll to the junior classrooms and play area on an afternoon during June when the other children have gone home. You can browse around and become familiar with this new environment. On arrival you could drop in to meet the Principal with your child and perhaps he/she could meet their teacher as well.
- Your child will like to have **his/her new uniform and new bag** when he/she begins. These help your child to identify more readily with the school and other children.
- Your child’s books will be taken from him/her, the first day of school and the teacher will hold on to them until such time as they are needed. This minimises books getting lost. Please have your child warned of this fact; in case he/she thinks they will never see the books again. All books/copies must be marked with your child’s name and readers must be covered. Your child will only feel important if he/she has something in their school bag, so perhaps you could buy a copy or colouring book for him/her, which could be used at home.



The Big Day

Coming in...

When you arrive at the classroom, **be as casual as you can**. Your child will meet the teacher and the other children and will be shown his/her chair.

Hopefully he/she will be absorbed in his/her new surroundings. So having assured your child you will be back to collect him/her, say goodbye and **make your getaway without delay**.

Going Home

- **Be sure to collect your child on time.** Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
- Keep out of view until the children are released.
- If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed ensure you tell the child and the teacher.

Handling the Upset Child

In spite of the best efforts of both teacher and parents a small number of children will still become upset. If your child happens to be one them, don't panic. Patience and perseverance can work wonders.

A Word of Advice

- **Trust the teacher:** She is experienced and resourceful and is used to coping with all kinds of starting-off problems.
- **Try not to show any outward signs of your own distress.** Sometimes the parents are more upset than the child and are the main cause of his/her anxiety.
- When you have reassured your child, leave as fast as possible. The teacher can distract and humour him/her more easily when you are not around.
- Check back discreetly in a short while. You will invariably find that calm has been restored.
- **You must be firm from the start.** Even if a child is upset you must insist that they stay for a short time, even ten minutes. He/she must never feel that he/she is winning the psychological battle of wills.

As Time goes On...

- School begins at 9.15 am. To ease the child into the school routine we have a policy where Junior Infants go home for the first two weeks at 1.00 pm (so no lunch). After that they go home at 2.00 pm. Please make sure that your child is collected on time.
- **Get him/her in the habit of being in good time for school from the beginning:** School start: 9.15 am. Mid-morning break: 11.00 am to 11.15 am and lunch break: 1.00 pm to 1.30 pm.
- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. You should ensure that he/she gets to bed early and has a good night sleep.
- When your child has settled in and looks upon school as a "home from home", do continue to show interest in his/her daily adventures. Give him/her an ear if he/she wants to tell you things, but don't pester your child with questions.
- Mind that you take some of his/her "stories" with a pinch of salt.
- If his/her progress is slow, do not compare him/her adversely with other children while he/she is listening. **Loss of self-esteem can be very damaging.**
- Be careful too about criticising his/her teacher in his/her presence. Remember that he/she is the father/mother figure while your child is at school and for his/her own well being it is important that your child has a good positive image of him/her.
- The last caution applies to your child's image of the school as well. **His/her school is always "the greatest" whatever its faults.**
- He/she is not going to be a model of perfection all the time—thankfully. You should try to have patience with his/her shortcomings and praise for his/her achievements.