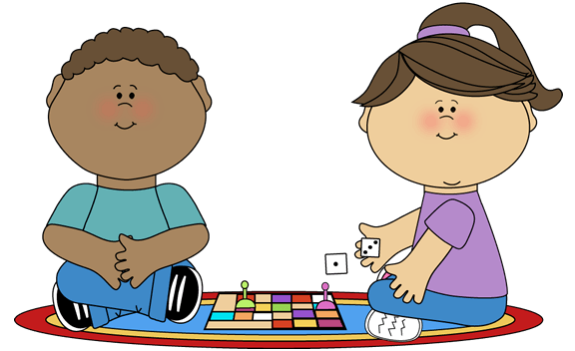


# Starting School



Scoil Chiarain Naofa,  
Dubhras, Cinn Mhara, Co. na Gaillimhe.

## Foreword



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.

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.



## Getting Ready for Learning

**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.  
Teaching each child to **accept the general order**, which is necessary for the class to work well.



### Preparing for school Before Your Child Starts...

You should ensure that he/she is **as independent as possible** - physically, emotionally and socially. If he/she can look after himself/herself 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/tissue 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 he/she starts school will not cause him/her any great anxiety.

Play 'pretend school' with your child. Help to practice putting things in and out of the school bag and to open and close their lunchbox.



### Preparing for the 'Big Day'

The child's first day at school is a day to remember for the rest of his/her life. **You can help to make it a really happy one for him/her.**

**Tell him/her about school** beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome for him/her and he/she will meet new friends. This would also be a wonderful opportunity to share your 1<sup>st</sup> day at school experiences with your son/daughter.

### **The First Day:**

Please arrive to the class on time on the day. Give a hug, say goodbye and give an assurance that you will collect your child at the proper time. **Then Leave.** (Even though your heart may be breaking....) Almost all children are busy and happy within minutes of their parents leaving.

## **The Big Day**

### **Coming in....**

When you arrive at the school, **be as casual as you can.** He/she will meet the teacher and the other children. Hopefully he/she will be absorbed in his/her new surroundings. So, having assured him/her you will be back to collect him/her, say your goodbye and **make your getaway without delay.**



### **Home Time**

**For the first two days all juniors will go home at 12.30.** Normal home time is 2pm. The children will be brought to the front lobby for collection each day. If there are any special collection arrangements please let us know. There is a Breakfast Club an After-School Service available for any parents/guardians who wish to avail of it. This Breakfast Club runs from 8am to school start time and Afterschool runs till 6 p.m. Each day.



### **School books**

*The school will buy all the required books during the summer and have them ready for September.*

Please label and cover your child's books in the first or second week of return. The class teacher will hold on to them as this minimises books being lost or all the pages being completed in the first week. Please have your child warned of this fact; in case he/she thinks they will never see the books again.

**Clothes:**

The children wear the standard uniform.

Black on the bottom half (trousers, skirt, pinafore, tracksuit bottom etc.) Yellow polo shirt & green sweatshirt with crest.

Please ensure that all clothes likely to be removed i.e. coats, hats, scarves, gloves, jumpers etc. are clearly labeled with your child's name as many children possess similar items.

Most items can be bought in the chain stores. The sweatshirt with the crest can be purchased at National School wear Centre in Liosban Estate (the Tuam Road).

**Stationery:**

Please ensure that your child has, clearly labeled:

- 2 pencils, preferably thick to suit a beginner
- 1 sharpener to suit the pencils,
- Colours. We recommend coloured pencils as they last longer and are sturdy,
- A sturdy rubber.

**Assessment;**

Informal assessment will be continually made by your child's teacher. At the end of Senior Infants, our Learning Support teacher will oversee a specific standardised reading test after which Learning Support teaching will be available if necessary. Every year near the end of the Christmas term one day is taken over with parent- teacher meetings.

Formal written reports are sent out at the end of the summer term.



### **Health and Safety:**

As part of our school health programme, we encourage regular washing of hands, particularly around eating time and after toilet use. We are not however always able to oversee this, so please remind your child of its importance.

If your child develops any contagious illness such as chickenpox please keep him away from school until the period of contagion is over and inform his/her teacher immediately.

We recommend that you check your child regularly for lice, which are highly contagious, treat immediately if they occur and inform the teacher so that notification of possible risk may be sent out to other parents.

All information regarding your child's health is treated in the strictest confidence.

Occasionally your permission will be required for dental, eye or other health examinations.

### **Breaks:**

There are two breaks during the school day 11:00 to 11.15 and from 12.30 to 1.10



### **Preparing Your Child for Schoolwork:**

Good writing is all about muscle and motor control so it will help your child greatly if your child is practiced at colouring, drawing, tearing paper, manipulating materials such as plasticine, making jigsaws etc., Reading aloud to your child will cultivate an interest in, and love of reading.

### **Toys:**

There is no need for children to bring in toys into school and we do not encourage this practice because of breakages, competition and peer pressure.

### Party Invitations.

To avoid upset to the children, party invitations are not given out at school. You will be given a list of contact numbers for the parents of the children in Junior Infants. All communications can be private then.

### Information Bulletins:

Please keep an eye on your child's homework folder as they may contain notes for parents/guardians.



### Packed Lunches

Lunch is an important meal for school going children. We will **ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start**. Also, please, only give your child something you feel he/she can easily manage to eat. Children are not normally very hungry at school, so a little snack will do. We have a healthy eating policy in our school. Lunch suggestions from **Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools** From [www.healthinfo.ie](http://www.healthinfo.ie) Please send a piece of fruit that can be easily eaten from the hand for Fruit Break each day. On Fridays the children are allowed to bring **ONE** small treat. Please ensure that your child's lunch box is clearly labeled with your child's name.

### Going Home

- Be sure to **collect him/her 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 of 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 him/her, 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 he/she stay for a short time-even ten minutes. He/she must never feel that they are winning the psychological battle of wills.

### As Time Goes on...

Reception time is from 9am to 9.20am. This reception time is vital for the children to settle into their day therefore leading to better concentration and learning. To ease the child into the school routine, we have a policy where junior infants go home early for the first few days.

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's sleep. When he/she has settled in and, hopefully, 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 him/her 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 to him/her.**

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.

Children often "forget" or relay messages incorrectly, so **please, check Class dojo & WhatsApp for messages.**

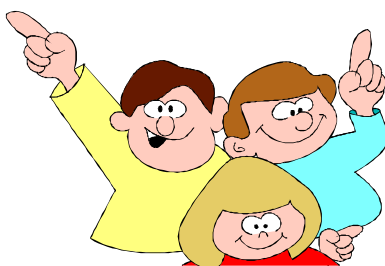


## Some Important Areas of Early Learning

### Developing his/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

**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 him/her. 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. He/she will have his/her own particular favourite stories that he/she never tires of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get him/her to tell them to you.



### **First Steps 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 his/her 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. We use the Jolly Phonics Approach in the teaching of reading. The Jolly Phonics Parent Guide will be sent out in September. In the meantime, feel free to check out the Jolly Learning website.

### **You can help....**

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read him/her a variety of stories from time to time. He/she will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- You must convey to him/her gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.
- Look at the pictures with him/her and talk to him/her about what they say.
- Read him/her nursery rhymes. He/she will learn them off his/her own bat. Don't try to push him/her.
- Above all, don't push him/her with his/her early reading. You may turn him/her 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 at least heard of the letters. If he/she knows what each one looks like, all the better.



### **Getting Ready for Writing**

Making letters on paper is not easy for the small child. He/she must learn to hold the pencil properly and make regular shapes. His/her hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage. Your child will be learning to write lower case letters initially so it would be very helpful if you could stick up your child's name written in this way perhaps on your child's bedroom door so that he/she can be familiar with it.

### **You Can Help...**

He/she 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.
- Play dough to make his/her 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. He/she may be making block 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 blocks and practise his/her new system whenever he/she feels like it. Consult the teacher about this. Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is his/her definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change him/her.



## **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 he/she uses in understanding and talking about certain things in his/her daily experience.

### **For Example:**

- He/she associates 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 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.**

We would want his/her parents/guardians 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 code as well. If they must learn Irish, let them enjoy it and master it to the best of their ability.

### **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.

Our religious education is delivered through the 'Grow In Love Programme'.

**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 your child whom 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.**



### **Positive Behaviour**

We encourage positive behaviour with the emphasis on 'do's' rather than 'don'ts';

- Do Be Gentle - don't hurt anyone
- Do Be Kind and Helpful - don't hurt people's feelings
- Do Listen - don't interrupt
- Do Work Hard – don't waste yours or another people's time
- Do Be Honest – don't cover up the truth
- Do Look After Property – don't waste or damage things

## Parting Thoughts

### Who is the Boss?

Bit by bit the child will get used to the general discipline of the classroom. He/she will get to understand very quickly that in certain important matters an instruction from the teacher must be obeyed promptly and without question.

### Teacher and Parent

At the early stages some parents may meet the teacher on a daily basis. However, if there is something in particular that you would like to discuss you can arrange to meet her at a time when you both can have a little peace and quiet.

### Easy Does It

There are lots of ideas and suggestions in this little book 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.**

### Our Hope

We are offering this Guide to Parents as a little practical help in dealing with the education of their children at the very early stages. We will be very happy if you dip into it from time to time and find something in it of value to you and your child.



*“Mol an age, agus tiocfaidh sí”*

### FURTHER INFORMATION

The following sites may be useful: -

[www.doorusns.ie](http://www.doorusns.ie)

[www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)

[www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

[www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

[www.healthinfo.ie](http://www.healthinfo.ie)

[www.schoolsdays.ie](http://www.schoolsdays.ie)

school website

information on curriculum

national parent's council

special educational need

health & nutrition

general information

Thanks to IPPN for much of the content in this booklet.

**WE'LL SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER!**

**I wish you all a safe, happy and enjoyable Summer.**

