

A Message from the Principal

The staff of Scoil an Linbh Íosa take great pleasure in welcoming you to our school. We aim to develop the full potential of each child and to celebrate their uniqueness and individuality. We derive great personal and professional fulfillment from the role we play in the lives of young people whose education is entrusted to us.

We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and so we look forward to the opportunity to build on that foundation as we journey together in educating your children. Thank you for joining us on this path.

Le gach dea ghuí,

Anne Reid

Principal



New Junior Infants



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.

We know from experience that parents are very anxious to help in any way possible. 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. It includes some ideas for the home, which should stimulate your child's interest and nurture her.

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.

Preparation for School

Goals for your child

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/unzip his/her coat and hang it up.
- Use the toilet without help and manage pants or 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 tissue when necessary.
- Share toys and playthings with others and “take turns”.
- Tidy up and put away his/her playthings.
- Organise and take care of personal belongings e.g. books, pencils, lunch box etc.
- 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 starts school will not cause him/her any great anxiety.

Goals for you

Your 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 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.
- Don't use school or the teacher as a threat. "If you behave like that for teacher she'll be unhappy with you" though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.
- He/she will like to have his/her new uniform and his new bag when he begins. These help him/her identify more readily with the school and other children.
- Make sure that you are familiar with the policies of the school with regard to code of behaviour, homework etc. These can be viewed on the school website www.killymard.com. If you have any concerns about them, broach the matter with the teacher/ principal. Otherwise, it will be assumed that you are happy to comply with them!
- Fill in the enrolment forms carefully, giving the teacher as much information as he/she needs to care for your child effectively. Should you move house, change your phone number or your doctor you will need to have the enrolment form altered accordingly

School Uniform

- The children wear a grey uniform with a sky blue shirt , grey trousers/skirt/pinafore, light blue shirt and black shoes. Please ensure that all clothes likely to be removed i.e. coats, hats, scarves, jumpers etc. are clearly labelled with your child's name. We have some spare clothes for use if needed, however if your child has any toilet problems please let teacher know and send in a spare set of clothes for emergencies.

P.E./Extra Curricular Activities



Navy tracksuits / sky blue polo shirt / navy sweatshirt with school crest and runners should be worn on P.E. days. You will be informed of P.E. days in September. Extra-curricular activities such as GAA coaching/gymnastics/dancing etc may take place throughout the year. You will be informed of these activities in advance .

School Books



- The text books and copy books for all classes are ordered by the school and will be distributed to the children when they start school. In September a booklist will be sent to you with a list of all items that have been purchased for your child by the school. Information will also be forwarded to you regarding payment of book fees.

School stationery

Children should have crayons, trigrip pencils X 2, rubber, sharpener, pritt stick and scissors (all clearly labelled).

The Big Day

The first day of school for Junior Infants starts at 9.20a.m. For the first 5 days they are collected at 12.30p.m. Please provide a small snack for these days. This allows them to gradually settle in. After the 5 days children will finish at 2.00p.m. Children will always line up in the school yard and will be collected from here by their parents.

Coming in on the first day:

When you arrive at the classroom, be as casual as you can. He/she will meet the teacher and the other children and will be shown his/her chair and given an activity to do.

Hopefully he/she will be absorbed in their new surroundings. So, having assured him/her you will be back to collect him, wish him/her goodbye and make your way without delay.

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.

- 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 sign of your own 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.

Packed Lunches



We strongly urge you to follow our Healthy Eating Policy. We recommend a small snack, i.e. fruit and juice for the morning break and a nutritious lunch, i.e. sandwiches, yoghurt, fruit etc for the lunch break. Please provide the necessary cutlery and have fruit peeled. Make sure that children can open and close their own lunchboxes / food containers. Extra drinks are recommended for PE days and warmer weather. Please ensure that your child's lunchbox is clearly labelled.

Going Home

- Be sure to collect him/her on time from the school yard. Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
- If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed ensure you tell the child and the teacher.

As Time Goes on

- School begins at 9.20a.m. To ease the child into the school routine we have a policy where Junior Infants go home for the first 5 days at 12.30p.m. After that they go home at 2p.m.
- 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.
- If his/her progress is slow do not compare your child adversely with other children in his/her learning. Loss of self-esteem can be very damaging to him/her. All children progress at different stages.

Homework

The pupils will receive a small amount of homework daily Mon-Thurs each week. The teacher will put a list of activities to be completed in their homework pack each evening.

Some Important Areas of Early Learning



Developing the 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 struggle 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.

How to 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. 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.
- He/she will have his 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 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..

- 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.
- Have attractive colourful books in the home
- 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.
- Take him/her to the library.
- Above all, don't push him/her with his early reading. You may turn him/her against it for evermore.
- 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.

Understanding Maths



First a Word of Advice

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 uses in understanding and talking about certain things in his daily experience e.g.

- He associates certain numbers with 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.

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.

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.

We would ask his/her parents to give every encouragement and help 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.

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.

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:

- (a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc
 - (b) Plasticene (Marla) to make his/her own shapes
 - (c) A colouring book and thick crayons
 - (d) 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. The 'tripod grip' is pencil hold your child should be encouraged to use. It will be difficult to change him/her later.

- He/she may be making capital 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.
- Encourage your child to make markings on paper with their pencils and crayons. Their markings will tell their story. Take an interest in their markings as they show them to you. This will encourage them to create an interest in writing. Again, don't overdo it. Don't force it. Let it be their markings.
- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is his/her definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change it.

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 also through Religious Education. The moral and social aspects of religion 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. 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 and telling you what he/she has discovered.

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.

As time progresses your child will get used to the general discipline of the classroom. They will get to understand very quickly that in certain important matters an instruction from the teacher must be obeyed promptly and without question. It is very important that parents reinforce positive social behaviour at home also.

Teacher and Parent

At the early stages some parents meet the teacher almost daily and this is a very desirable thing. However, if there is something 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.