

Information Booklet



for
Parents of Junior Infants
starting school

at

Scoil Mhuirg Barrion na hEirgann

REFLECTION

“Train a child in the way she should go”

Every child has a particular bent; a unique set of characteristics created by God. You’ll see it in their temperament, their gifts and their interests. Resist the temptation to treat each of them the same; they’re different! Cain was a farmer; his brother Abel was a shepherd. Jacob and Esau were twins, yet they couldn’t have been more different. And how about the prodigal son who became a ‘party animal’ while his big brother stayed at home and acted responsibly?

Love each of your children unconditionally, but develop them individually:

- (a) Who are they? (b) What do they like? (c) What do they succeed at? (d) How do they handle change? (e) How do they behave when they’re alone?

Stop talking and start listening to what they value, what they fear and what they need. Make sure that they’re anchored spiritually. Don’t force them to go the way you wish you’d gone. No! Help them discover their own identity and then become their biggest fan. If that means putting your own dreams ‘on hold’, it’s a sacrifice you’ll never regret!

Remember that they are your future; your very essence will live on in them. The trees you grow today will determine the fruit you eat tomorrow, so ask God to help you do a good job with your children!

A CHILD'S ADVICE TO PARENTS

1. My hands are small. Please don't expect perfection whenever I make a bed, draw a picture, or throw a ball.
2. My eyes have not seen the world as yours have. Please let me explore it at my own level without unnecessary restrictions.
3. Housework will always be there, but I will be little only for a short time. Please take time to explain about this wonderful world.
4. My feelings are tender. Please be sensitive to my needs. Treat me as you would like to be treated.
5. I am a special gift from God. Treasure me as God intended, holding me accountable for my actions, giving me guidelines to live by, and disciplining me in a loving manner.
6. I need your encouragement to grow, so go easy on the criticism. Try to correct my behaviour without criticizing me as a person.
7. Give me the freedom to make decisions. Permit me to fail, so I can learn from my mistakes. Then I'll be prepared to make the kind of decisions life requires of me as an adult.
8. Don't do jobs over that I have done. This makes me feel that my efforts don't quite measure up to your expectations. I know it's hard, but please don't compare me with my brother or sister.
9. Please don't be afraid to leave for a weekend together. Kids need vacations from parents, just as parents need to get away occasionally. This is also a great way to show us kids that your marriage is very special.
10. Please set a good example by taking me to church regularly. I enjoy learning more about God.

FOREWARD

Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste



Starting school will be the first big change in the life of your child. Up to this she has felt safe and secure with you in the home and family but now 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 fond 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 they 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 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 her introductory stage in Junior Infants.

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



A Parent's Love

Some day when my children are old enough to understand, I will tell them:

I have loved you enough to ask you about where you were going, with whom and what time you would get home.

I loved you enough to insist that you buy a bike that we could afford to give you, with your own money.

I loved you enough to make you return a Milky-Way – with a bite out of it and to confess: “I stole this.”

I loved you enough to let you see hurt, disappointment, disgust and tears in my eyes.

I loved you enough to admit I was wrong and ask for your forgiveness.

I loved you enough to let you stumble, fall, and hurt.

But most of all, I loved you enough to say NO when you hated me for it. That was the hardest part of all.

Getting Ready for Learning

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 óige, agus tiocfaidh sí”



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:

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** – one of the most enjoyable and effective ways.
- 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.



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Parting Thoughts

Who is the Boss?

Bit by bit the child will get used to the general discipline of the classroom. 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 meet the teacher almost daily and this is a very desirable thing. 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 her in a systematic way.

But if you find from time to time that she enjoys a fun approach to certain aspects of learning then we would say give it a go – but remember **don't overdo it**.

Before Your Child Starts

You should ensure that she is as independent as possible – physically, emotionally and socially. If she can look after herself in these areas she will feel secure and confident and settle in readily.

It would help greatly if she is able to –

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

Other areas of the Curriculum

The child in junior infants learns a lot through many other activities, which do not need any elaboration here. Her general development is enhanced through History, Geography, Science, Visual Arts, Drama, Music, SPHE, PE and of course through Religious Education.

In regard to Religion, 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 she has learned at school. She can then make 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 your child whom she played with at school and to ensure 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 enclosed **School Booklet for Parents.**



Preparing for the 'Big Day'

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

- **Tell her about school** beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome for her and 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 lightly can make some children very apprehensive.
- You will be invited to **take her for a stroll to the junior classrooms** and play area on an afternoon during June when the other children have gone home.

She can browse around and become familiar with her new environment. On arrival you could drop in to meet the Principal with her and she could meet her teacher, as well.

- She will like to have her **new uniform and her new bag with her name clearly marked on them** when she begins. These help her identify more readily with the school and other children.

Getting Ready for Writing

Making letters on paper is not easy for the small child. She must **learn to hold the pencil properly** and make regular shapes.

Her hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage.

You Can Help ...

- She must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get her manipulating toys like:
 - a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc.
 - b) Plasticene (Márla) to make her own shapes
 - c) Colouring book and **thick crayons**
 - d) Paper that can be cut up with a safe scissors
- When she begins to use a pencil make sure that she holds it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change this once it becomes a habit.
- She may be making block letters at home even before she comes to school. This is fine. But when she starts making lower case letters at school you should try to get her to discontinue the capitals and practise her new system whenever she feels like it. Consult the teacher about this.
- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is her definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change her.

Céard/Cad é sin? (What is that?)

An bhfuil ... ? (Is?)

Cá bhfuil ... (Where)

Tóg amach an mála, an lón etc.

(Take out the bag, the lunch etc.)

Téig amach (Go out). **Tar Isteach** (Come in)

An bhfuil cead agam dul amach?

(May I go out?)

Más é do thoil é. (Please)

Tabhair dom ... (Give me)

An maith leat ... (Would you like?)

Is maith liom. Ní maith liom. (I like / I do not like)

Cé hé/hí sin? Who is he/she?)

An bhfaca tú? (Did u see?)

Chonaic mé/Ní fhaca me (I saw/I didn't see)

Cad is ainm duit? (What is your name)

Conas tá ú? (How are you)

Glan an ... (Clean the ...)

Breithlá sona duit (Happy Birthday)

Tóg amagh ... (Take out ..)

Cé atá ag an doras? (Who's at the door?)

- **Your child's books will be taken from her on 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 she thinks she will never see the books again.

All books/copies must be marked with your child's name and readers must be covered.



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 invited to sit down and play with the items on the table.

We have a **Magic Show** for the children and you are welcome to stay and have a cuppa afterwards while the girls are lead back to their respective classes by the fun Magician.

We ask you to please remain in the hall after this and NOT to return to the classroom after the show. This allows for a smooth transition.

Packed Lunches

Lunch is an important meal for school going children.

It should provide one third of their recommended daily allowance of nutrients without being high in fat, sugar or salt. It should also provide dietary fibre (roughage). **Due to the fact that some children in the school have a nut allergy, nuts or any foods containing nuts are not allowed. We are a NUT FREE SCHOOL**



The traditional packed lunch of milk and sandwiches is under attack from a range of convenience foods like sweets, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks.

Parents and teachers are concerned

about this trend but some find it difficult to come up with popular alternatives.

We have a healthy eating policy in this school and we will ask you to **encourage a healthy lunch right from the start**. Also, please, only give your child something you feel she can easily manage to eat and open. If you give your child a yoghurt or a petit filous, please enclose a plastic spoon in her lunch box. If you give her fruit, make sure it's small, oranges should be peeled. And grapes should be cut lengthways. Any unfinished foods should be taken home.

Ensure she has a good breakfast, as it's a long time until small lón at 11.00am.

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 the child.

You Can Help . . .

We would like parents to give every encouragement and help to the child in her 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. Let them enjoy the language and master it to the best of their ability.

The following are everyday Irish phrases your child will be learning. **Why not use them at home also?**

Oscail an doras, an cófra etc. (Open the door, the cupboard etc.)

Dún an doras, an cófra etc. (Close the door, the cupboard etc.)

Taispeáin dom an bord, an bosca etc. (Show me the table, the box etc.)

Sin bord, bosca etc. (That is a table, a box).

Seas/Seasagí. (Stand up).

Suigh/Suigi síos. (Sit down).

- 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.
- 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 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 her natural method of learning since she was a baby. This at times can be a nuisance but if it allows her to do the learning herself 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.

A Healthy Lunch

Start with the basics

A healthy packed lunch should contain bread or an alternative, a savoury filling which provides protein, a suitable drink and some fruit and/or vegetables.



A Word about Milk

Growing children should get approximately one pint of milk a day, or its equivalent as cheese, yoghurt or milk produce. This ensures that they get enough calcium which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. If a child does not drink a glass of milk at lunch, encourage her to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead.



The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for your children.

Bread & Alternatives

Bread or rolls, preferably wholemeal.

Rice – wholegrain.

Pasta – wholegrain

Potato Salad

Wholemeal Scones



Savouries

Lean Meat

Chicken/Turkey

Tinned Fish e.g. Tuna/Sardines

Cheese, including Edam, Cheddar,
Blarney, Cottage Cheese etc.

Quiche

Pasta

Fruit & Vegetables

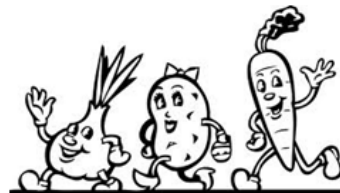
Apples, Banana, Peach, Plum,

Pineapple cubes, Mandarins, Orange

segments, Grapes (cut lengthways), Fruit Salad,

Dried fruit, Tomato, Cucumber,

Sweetcorn, Coleslaw, Carrots.



You Can Help

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read her a variety of stories from time to time. She will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- You must convey to her gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.
- Look at the pictures with her and talk to her about what they say.
- Read her nursery rhymes. She will learn them off her own bat. Don't try to push her.
- Above all, don't push her with her early reading. You may turn 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 she at least heard of the letters. If 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 she uses in understanding and talking about certain things in her daily experience e.g.

- Try to make time to listen when she wants to tell you something that is important to her. But don't always make her a centre of attention.
- Answer her genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture her sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Introduce her gently to the ideas of why? How? When? Where? If? etc. These demand more advanced language structures.
- She will have her own particular favourite stories that she never tires of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get 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 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.

Drinks

Milk, including low fat.

Fruit juices (*some fruit juices are very high in sugar*)

Yoghurt

Water



Going Home

1. Be sure to **collect her on time**. Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
2. Children **to be collected at the main entrance** -
Teacher will lead them out from class and will wait with each child until collected.
3. **Please remain outside the front door until the children are released.**
4. If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed (different person collecting her) **ensure you tell the child and the teacher in advance.**

Handling the Upset Child



Some Important Areas of Early Learning

Developing her Command of

Spoken Language

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. We understand how distressing it is to see your child upset but with a little time she will easily settle in.

It is important that the child's ability to talk is as advanced as possible. It is through speech that she communicates her thoughts and feelings, her needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If she cannot express these in words 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.

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 her anxiety.
- **When you have reassured her, leave as fast as possible.** The teacher can distract and humour her more easily when you are not around.
- Check back discreetly in a short while if you wish. You will invariably find that calm has been restored.

You Can Help . . .

- Talk to your child naturally and casually about things of interest that you or she may be doing at home, in the shop, in the car etc. Remember that all the time she is absorbing the language. It takes her a while to make it her own and to use it for her own needs.

- Be careful too about criticising her teacher in her presence. Remember that teacher is her mother figure while she is at school and for her own well-being it is important that she has a good positive image of her.
- This last caution applies to her image of the school as well. Her school is always “the greatest” whatever its faults.
- She is not going to be a model of perfection all the time – thankfully. You should try to have patience with her shortcomings and praise for her achievements.
- **Children often “forget”** or relay messages incorrectly, so **please, check your child’s bag each night for notes.**
- You have received 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 Art and Crafts and the money for photo-copying were paid before the end of September. You will get this bill in early September from Teacher. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings. These include Pupil’s Personal Accident Insurance Cover (September), School Photographs (November), Súgradh (Educational Magazine (December). Further details will be given during the year.

Mission Week

We have a tradition in this school of **Mission Week**. This week is a fundraiser for the Salesian Missions in Southern Africa and one other of our chosen charities. During this time our girls from 3rd class upwards bake buns/cakes and sell them to other classes. (Hence on those days the girls bring money for a bun). Our junior classes do a sponsored walk. Further details will be sent home nearer the time.

- **You must be firm from the start.** Even if a child is upset you must insist that she stay for a short time – even ten minutes. She must never feel that she is winning the psychological battle of wills.

As Time Goes on ...

- School begins at **8.55 a.m.** To ease the child into the school routine our Junior Infants go home for the first two weeks at 12.00 noon, third week at 1.00 p.m. (so no big lunch). After that they go home at 1.45 p.m. **Please make sure that your child is collected at 1.45 p.m.**
- Get her into the habit of being in good time for school from the beginning.
- Mid-morning break: 11.00 to 11.15 a.m.
- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. You should ensure that she **gets to bed early and has a good night’s sleep.** (12 hours sleep recommended).
- When she has settled in and hopefully looks upon school as a “home from home” do continue to show interest in her daily adventures. Give her an ear if she wants to tell you things – but don’t pester her with questions.
- Mind that you take some of her “stories” with a pinch of salt.
- If her progress is slow **do not compare her adversely with other children while she is listening. Loss of self-esteem can be very damaging to her.**