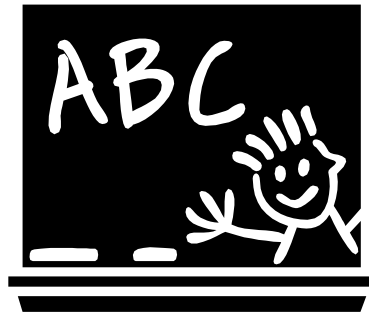


Booklet for Parents of Infants Starting School



Foreword

Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste.



Starting school will be the first big change in the life of your child. Up to this s/he has felt safe and secure with you in the home and family but now s/he 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.

Yours sincerely,

Clíodhna O'Brí.

Clíodhna O'Brí
Principal

Start of Term

School is scheduled to begin on **Thursday 26th August 2021.**

- **Junior Infants will start on Thursday and Friday at 10a.m.. and can be collected at 12 noon.**
 - **Monday 30th August your child will start at 09.15a.m.** and go home at 12 noon, so no lunch is necessary just a snack for little break.
 - **From Monday 6th September they will go home at 2 p.m.**
 - Please make sure that your child is collected at 2 p.m. as the teacher has lesson preparation and meetings scheduled after 2 p.m.
 - **Get your child into the habit of being punctual for school from the beginning.** Children find it very difficult to walk in on a class that has already started, as you can understand from the adult perspective.
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- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. You should ensure that s/he gets to bed early and has a good night's sleep. An average of 12 hours is recommended at this age group as they are growing steadily.
 - When s/he has settled in and hopefully, looks upon school as a "home from home" do continue to show interest in his/her daily adventures. Listen if s/he wants to tell you things-but don't overwhelm him/her with questions.
 - Mind that you take some of their "stories" with a pinch of salt. Other persons will be involved and the context of what happened must be taken into account.
 - If your child's progress is less than expected do not compare him/her adversely with other children while they are listening. **Loss of self-esteem can be very damaging to him/her.**
 - It is not helpful to criticise their teacher/any teacher in their presence. Remember that teachers are the parent figures while at school and for his/her own wellbeing it is important that s/he has a good positive image of the teacher/s.
 - This last caution applies to his image of the school as well. **His/Her school is always "the greatest"-whatever its faults.**
 - Your child is not going to be a model of perfection all the time-thankfully. You should try to have patience with his shortcomings and praise for his/her achievements.
 - Children often "forget" messages or relay them incorrectly, so **please, check your child's bag each night for notes and** monitor your Aladdin App daily for messages.
 - You have received a list outlining the copies your child will need for the year. We would appreciate if the money for **School Services** including book rental, Activity Books, Art & Crafts, Communications and ICT were paid as soon as possible. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on your purse strings, some of which may be optional. These include:
 - School Photographs
 - Folen's Christmas Annual

Further details will be given during the year.

- There is a tradition in the school of helping the "**Mission Children**", and so, we encourage each child to bring in a coin on Fridays, to help those less well off than ourselves. Infants have always been good in this regard and they love the thrill of being the best, despite being the newest in the school. So please participate and help them along.

The Big Day



Coming in...

We will be looking forward to your arrival in St. Anne's Loreto Primary School. When you arrive at the **school hall**, please **be as relaxed as you can**. You will meet the teacher and the other children there and then the pupils together with teacher will go to the classroom.

S/he will be absorbed in his/her new surroundings. So having assured your child that you will be back to collect him/her, wish them goodbye and **make your departure without delay**.

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 your child and message the teacher in advance.

Preparing for the 'Big Day'



The child's first day at school is a day to remember for the rest of his 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 s/he will meet new friends.

- **Don't use school or the teacher as a threat.** "If you behave like that for teacher he/she'll need to speak to us" though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.
- S/he likes to have **their new uniform and new bag** when they begin. These help children to identify more readily with the school and other children.
- The Book Rental scheme in operation in our school will have the books / activity books covered and handed to your child's teacher from the 1st day of term. This minimises books getting lost. Please make your child aware of this. All routine stationary must be covered and marked with your child's name.

Handling the Upset Child



In spite of the best efforts of both teacher and parents a small number of children will still become upset at times. If your child happens to be one of them don't panic. Encourage your child to share their worries and assure them that we will look after them. Patience and perseverance can work wonders!

A Word of Advice

- **Trust the teacher.** S/He is vastly experienced and resourceful and is used to coping with all kinds of settling-in issues.
- **Try not to show any outward signs of your own distress.** Sometimes parents are more upset than the child and can be the main cause of his/her anxiety.
- When you have reassured him/her, leave promptly. The teacher can distract and humour him/her much more easily when you are not around.
- Feel welcome to check back discreetly via a call to the school office 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 s/he stay for a while. S/He must understand that the adults know best what to advise and s/he must trust that we know best.

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).

The **traditional packed lunch of milk and sandwiches is under attack from a range of convenience foods** like crisps, sweets, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks. Parents and teachers are concerned about this trend but some find it difficult to come up with popular healthy alternatives. We will **ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.** Also, please, only give your

child something you feel he can easily manage to eat. You know your child's appetite best so you are best placed to match a healthy nutritious snack and lunch for them.

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

Bread & Alternatives

Bread or rolls, preferably wholemeal.

Rice – wholegrain.

Pasta – wholegrain.

Salads.

Wholemeal Scones.

Savouries

Lean Meat.

Chicken/Turkey.

Tinned Fish e.g. tuna/sardines.

Cheese, including Edam, cheddar, blarney, cottage.

Quiche.

Pizza.

Fruit & Vegetables

Apples, Banana, Peach, Plum, Pineapple cubes, Mandarins, Orange segments, Grapes, Fruit Salad, Dried fruit, Tomato, Cucumber, Sweetcorn, Coleslaw, Celery. No yogurts please as these will turn "runny" when not refrigerated.

Drinks

Plain Water

Milk, including low fat.

Fruit juices.

High juice Squashes, i.e. low sugar content.

Homemade soup (use Bovril occasionally as it is salty).



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 pudding. This ensures that they get enough calcium, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. If a child does not drink milk at school, encourage him/her or her to have a carton of yoghurt at home or a small helping of cheese instead.

Getting Ready for Learning

Before Your Child Starts...



You should ensure that s/he is **as independent as possible** - physically, emotionally and socially. If s/he can look after him/herself in these areas s/he will feel secure and confident and settle in readily.

Please practice with your child and ensure:

- **Button and unbutton his coat** and hang it up.
- **Use the toilet without help** and manage waistbands and buttons.
- Also **encourage personal hygiene** and cleanliness. Your child should know and practice how 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.
- Remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If s/he had this experience, then separation from his/her parents when s/he starts school will not cause him/her any great anxiety.



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 harness their readiness so that they can build on their pre-school foundations.

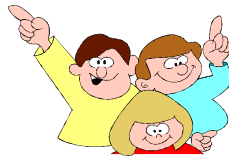
The **rates of progress of children can vary greatly.** We try to give them an opportunity to move ahead at their own pace or as near to it as possible within an age appropriate range.

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 in our school**, which is necessary for the class to work well.

Some Important Areas of Early Learning



Developing his/her Command of Spoken Language.

It is important that the child's ability to communicate is as advanced as possible. It is through speech that s/he communicates his thoughts and feelings, his/her needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If s/he cannot express these in words s/he will tend to remain silent and will often withdraw from the learning activity of the class. This can be the first sign of challenge in the school system and must be alleviated, 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 s/he may be doing-at home, in the shop, in the car, etc. Remember that all the time s/he 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 s/he wants to tell you something that is important to him/her yet don't make him/her the centre of attention at all times.
- 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.
- S/He will have his/her own particular favourite stories that s/he never tires of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get him/her to tell them to you.

First Steps in Reading

We very deliberately do not rush or pressure 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.

However the 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. Daily reading to your child is always recommended and for you to listen to your child reading in return results in great progress in this essential life skill.



How You Can Help..

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read him/her a variety of stories from time to time. S/He will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- You must convey to him/her gradually that books are valued. 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. S/He will learn them off his/her own bat. Don't try to pressure him/her.
- Above all, don't pressure him/her with their early reading. You may turn him/her against it for the long-term.
- 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 s/he at least has heard of the letters. If they recognise what each one looks and sounds like, all the better.

Understanding Maths

First a Gentle 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 s/he uses in understanding and talking about certain things in his/her daily experience e.g.

- S/He associates certain numbers with particular things – two hands, four wheels, five fingers etc.
- Counting – one, two, three, four, etc. and in reverse 4,3,2,1.
- 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, exploring, investigating and using real objects. This has been their natural method of exploring since they were a baby. This at times can be inconsistent but if it allows him/her to do the learning him/herself the final result is more worthwhile as it sticks with them.

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

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

Getting Ready For Writing

Forming letter/shapes on paper is not easy for the small child. S/He 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...

- S/He 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) Play Doh (Marla/plasticine) to make his/her own shapes
 - c) A colouring book and thick crayons – stay within the lines!
 - d) Sheets of paper / old newspapers that s/he can cut up with a safe scissors
- When s/he begins to use a pencil make sure that s/he holds it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change him/her later.

- S/He may be making block letters at home even before s/he comes to school. This is fine. But when s/he starts making lower case letters at school you need to get him/her to practise their teacher's instruction at home every day. If needs be consult the teacher about this.
- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is his definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change him/her.

Other Areas of the Curriculum

The child in junior classes learns a lot through many other activities. His/her general development is enhanced through Art & Craft, P.E., Music, SPHE (Social, Personal Health Education) SESE (Social, Environmental & Scientific Education) in addition to Religious Education.

In regard to Religious Education, 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 s/he has learned at school. S/He 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 your child whom s/he played with at school and to ensure s/he 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 on our website www.stannesnavan.ie for your reference.

ICT

St. Anne's Loreto Primary School is a Department of Education (DE) recognised Digital School. The school has a fully fitted computer room and Touch Screen Interactive Smart TV's in every class room. We also have a set of iPads each for Junior and Senior levels and a dedicated set for our Speech & Language Class, with software apps tailored to enhance the learning experiences of these levels to which all pupils have access.

Parting Thoughts

Who must the child listen to?

Bit by bit the child will get used to the general discipline of the classroom. S/He will understand promptly that in important matters an instruction from the teacher in the school, as likewise from the parents at home, must be obeyed promptly and without question.

Teacher and Parent

In the early stages some parents see the teacher almost daily and this is very positive. However, if there is something in particular that you need to discuss please arrange to meet him/her at a suitable time when you both can listen to each other and focus on the matter in mind.

Easy Does It

There are lots of ideas and suggestions in this booklet 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 s/he enjoys a fun approach to certain aspects of learning then we would say – give it a go – but remember **don't overdo it. We always advise to strike a balance between the fun and the firm approaches.**

Our Hope

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



“Mol an óige, agus tíocfaidh sí”