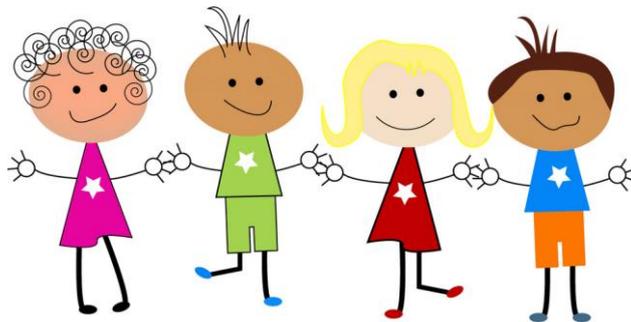


Welcome to



An Information Booklet for Parents of Infants
Starting School.



Foreword



Starting school will be the first big change in the life of your child. Up to this they have felt safe and secure with you in the home and family but now they are 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 booklet as a general guide for parents. It deals briefly with the period before your child comes to school and their 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. 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.

Before Your Child Starts...

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

It is generally beneficial if you child has attended pre-school for a year or more before starting school, however it is not essential, if certain skills are taught at home or if the child can remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If they have this experience, then separation from parents when starting school will not cause any great anxiety.

It would help greatly if they are able to-

- Button and unbutton coat and hang it up.
- Use the toilet without help and manage pants buttons & zip. (if child has difficulty, elastic waist pants may be a good idea)
- 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 a hanky/tissue when necessary.

- Share toys and playthings with others and “take turns”.
- Tidy up and put away playthings.

Preparing for the ‘Big Day’

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 really happy one for them.

- Tell them about school beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where they will get a big welcome and he/she will meet new friends.
- Don’t use school or the teacher as a threat.
- You will get notification of our junior infant induction day in due course, where your child will spend some time getting to know his/her teacher and prospective classmates in June prior to them starting that following September.
- Your child will like to have their new uniform and their new bag (one which they can open and close with ease) when they begin. These help him/her identify more readily with the school and other children. The uniform consists of a royal blue sweatshirt with crest (available in G&T Fashions in Tullamore), pale blue polo shirt and navy skirt/trousers (no tracksuit bottoms except on PE days, details of which to follow). Footwear is black shoes and a pair of indoor shoes e.g. black plimsolls.
- 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. All books provided by Book Rental/copies must be marked with your child’s name (on front cover) and preferably covered.

The Big Day

Coming in...



When you arrive at the classroom, be as casual as you can. Your child will once again meet the teacher and the other children and will be shown their chair. (Your child’s name will be on their coat hook and desk).

Hopefully they will be absorbed in their new surroundings. So having assured them you will be back to collect them, wish them goodbye and make your getaway without delay. Junior Infant day ends at 12:30 p.m. until the last Friday in September after which they will go home at 2:00 p.m. starting from the first Monday in October. Please note that parents must come to the front door to collect their child at home time.

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/she can easily manage to eat. 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
- Tortilla wrap
- Pitta bread

Meats & Meat Alternatives

- Lean meat
- Chicken/turkey
- Tinned fish e.g. tuna/salmon
- Hard boiled egg (chopped or mashed)

Fruit & Vegetables

Apples, Banana, Peach, Plum, Pineapple cubes, Mandarins, Orange segments, Grapes, Fruit Salad, Dried fruit, Tomato, Cucumber, Lettuce, Sweetcorn, Carrot sticks, Celery.

Drinks

- Milk, including low fat
- Water
- Fruit juices with low sugar content.
- Milk drinks
- Smoothies

Start with the Basics

A healthy packed lunch should contain bread or an alternative, a 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 drink. 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 him or her to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead. Please provide your child with a lunchbox that he/she can open themselves.

Going Home

- Be sure to collect your child on time from the front door. 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 i.e. if someone unfamiliar to the school is doing pick up, 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 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. They must never feel that they are winning the psychological battle of wills.

As Time Goes on...

- Doors open and school begins at 9.10 a.m. **Get them into the habit of being in good time for school from the beginning.** To ease the child into the school routine we have a policy where Junior Infants go home at 12.30 p.m. until the last Friday in September

and from the first Monday in October they will go home at 2.00 p.m. Please make sure that your child is collected at 2.00 p.m. from the front door as the teacher needs that time between 2.00 p.m. and 2.50 p.m. to clean up after the day or she may need to supervise another class. Break time: 11.00 a.m. to 11.15 a.m. Lunchtime: 12.50 p.m. to 1.15 p.m. Children are given time to eat their lunch in the classroom before going outside for break and lunch.

- Homework will not commence until after Halloween Break and there will be no written homework until Term 2. Homework in Term 1 will focus on Introduction to Literacy, Sounds and a Love of Reading.
- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. You should ensure that your child 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 their daily adventures. Give him/her an ear if they want to tell you things-but don't pester them 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 a child.**
- Be careful too about criticising the teacher in his/her presence. Remember that she is his/her mother figure while they are at school and for their own well being it is important that they have a good positive image of her.
- This last caution applies to your child's image of the school as well. **Their 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/her shortcomings and praise for his/her achievements.
- Children often "forget" or relay messages incorrectly, so **please, check your child's bag each night for notes.** Once homework starts, homework diary must be signed by a parent each night.
- You will receive a book list and book rental list outlining the books and other bits and pieces your child will need for the year. We would appreciate it if the envelope money is paid on the first day of school and the voluntary contribution money is paid before the end of October (information to follow). As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings, but some are optional. These include:

- School Photographs (optional)
- Insurance (optional)
- Súgradh - Christmas Annual (optional)
- Christmas cards (optional)
- Fin the Potter (compulsory)

- Music (compulsory)
- Swimming (compulsory) 1st to 6th Class only
- School Tour (optional)
- Book Rental (compulsory)
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Further details will be given during the year.

• There is a tradition in our school of helping those less fortunate than ourselves so throughout the year there will be some charity fundraising events, for example:

- The Shoebox Appeal (October/November)
- Trick or treat for Temple Street (Halloween)
- Animal food collection for the OSPCA (World Pet/Animal Week)
- Christmas Jumper Day for Crumlin Hospital

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, needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If a child cannot express these in words they 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, etc. Remember that all the time he/she is absorbing the language they hear about them. It takes him a while to make it his/her own and to use it for his/her own needs.
- Try to make time to listen when your child wants to tell you something that is important to him/her. But don't always make him/her the centre of attention.
- Answer genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture the child's sense of curiosity and wonder.

- Introduce your child 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.



You can Help...

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read 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 him/her and talk to him/her about what they say.
- Read nursery rhymes. Your child will learn them off his/her own bat. Don't try to push him/her.
- 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 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

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

- 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 himself/herself the final result is well worth it (see Maths at home book for various class levels).

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 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.

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...

He must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get your child manipulating toys like:

- Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc
 - Play dough to make his own shapes
 - A colouring book and thick crayons
 - Sheets of paper that he can cut up with a safe scissors
- When he/she begins to use a pencil make sure that they hold it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change him/her later. Left/right handed pencils which aid pencil grip from the beginning are available to buy from the school.
 - Your child 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 this new system whenever he/she feels like it.
 - Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is your child's definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change them.

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, SPHE (History/Geography/Science) 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. They can then make their 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 he/she played with at school and to ensure that they aren't alone, also encourage mixing rather than being dependent on one friend only. **Rough behaviour is totally discouraged in Charleville N.S.** You will find a list of school rules and policies in the enclosed School Booklet for Parents.

Our School Website – www.charlevillens.ie

Please feel free to look up our school website regularly throughout the year. On it you will find general information about our school which will be helpful to you, such as:

- Names of staff and staff roles
- Board of Management & Parents Association members
- School policies (please ensure you have read through these before your child starts school)
- School holiday list
- School uniform
- Various school activities, events and tours
- Parish events
- Pupil's own work
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Your Child's Health

When your child is in junior infants, they will get two vaccines:

The 4 in 1 booster to protect against diphtheria, polio, tetanus and whooping cough (pertussis) and a second dose of the MMR vaccine to protect against measles, mumps and rubella (advance notification will be given to you prior to this).

Throughout senior infants health screening will take place. A public health nurse will check your child's hearing, eye sight, height and weight (again, advance notification will be given prior to this).

Parting Thoughts

Who is the Boss?

Bit by bit your 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 parents generally meet the teacher regularly to check that their child is settling in well. Parent teacher meetings will take place during the first term usually November (notification will be given to parents). If a parent has any concerns that may require a lengthy discussion, they may phone the school office or ask the teacher to arrange an appointment.

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 your child 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.