

# Scoil Bhríde N.S.

Stillbrook  
Mountrath  
Co. Laois



## Information Booklet for Parents of New Junior Infants.



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# A Message from the Principal

As Principal of Scoil Bhríde it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our school. Our School motto 'Mol an óige, agus tiocfaidh sí' is at the heart of our holistic approach to education. We aim to develop the full potential of each child and to celebrate their uniqueness and individuality. My colleagues and I 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 daughters. Thank you for joining us on this path.

Le gach dea ghuí,

Mary Rohan  
Principal

# New Junior Infants

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. The transition from home to school may seem a big step for someone so small but most children manage it without any great fuss or stress - in fact, take to it like ducks to water!

However, we do want to ensure that your child's first experience of school is one of happy involvement. It will lay a very good foundation for fruitful school years ahead. We know that parents are very anxious to help in any way possible. We have, therefore, 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. It includes some ideas for the home, which should stimulate your child's interest and nurture her desire to know more. 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 are like sponges, taking it all in and learning 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. Progress rates amongst 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 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.
- Teaching through play - the most enjoyable and effective way.
- Encouraging co-operation with the teacher and other children.
- Allowing them to perform tasks by themselves.
- Encouraging sharing.
- Getting each child to accept the general order. This is necessary for the class to work well.

## **Preparation for school**

### **Goals for your child:**

Try to ensure that she is as independent as possible before starting school. It would help greatly if she is able to:

- Change footwear. Children are required to have slippers for the classroom and suitable outdoor shoes for the playground. Velcro fasteners are easiest for children.  
(Runners for P.E.)
- Button and unbutton her coat and hang it up.
- Use the toilet without help and manage pants buttons.
- Demonstrate personal hygiene and cleanliness. Your child should know how to flush the toilet and wash her hands, without having to be told. She should also know how to use a hanky when necessary.
- Share toys and playthings with others and "take turns".
- Tidy up and put away her playthings and school materials.

- Remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If she has had this experience separation from parents when she starts school will not cause any great anxiety.

If she is able to look after herself in these areas your child will feel secure and confident, and will be ready for school.

### Goals for you:

- Make sure that you are familiar with the policies of the school with regard to playground accidents, supervision, homework etc. These can be viewed on the school website [scoilbhridemountrath.weebly.com](http://scoilbhridemountrath.weebly.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.

### **Preparing for the big day**

Your child's first day at school is one 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 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 be very cross with you!" Though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive!
- Before the summer holidays you will be invited to bring your child to visit the classroom so that she can meet the teacher and become familiar with this new environment. You may like

to take this opportunity to talk to the teacher about specific concerns regarding your child e.g.: health or emotional state. You will receive the book list on this visit.

## **The First Day of School**

- New Infants start school at 9.20am on their first day and are collected at 12.15pm for the first two weeks. This allows them to gradually settle in. Please be on time for dropping and collection.
- After these two weeks, the normal infant school day starts at 9.20 a.m. and finishes at 2.00p.m. It is very important that your child is dropped and collected on time every day.
- It helps to have the uniform and schoolbag ready for the first day. Please remember to have a name label on everything that your child owns.
- When you arrive in the classroom be as casual as you can. Your child will meet the teacher, be shown to a table and given an activity to do. Assure your child that you will be back shortly, say goodbye and leave 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 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 the child more easily, when you are not around. If you wish, 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 she stay for a short time. It must not become a psychological battle of wills that the child feels she has won.

### **As Time Goes on...**

- School starts at 9:20a.m. Until your child is reliable enough to go straight into class when she arrives in school, please deliver her into the direct care of the teacher.
- To ease the child into the school routine we have a policy where Junior Infants go home for the first two weeks at 12.15pm. Going forward home time is at 2.00pm. Get her into the habit of being in good time for school from the beginning.
- Mid-morning break: 11.00am to 11.10am. Lunch break: 12:30pm to 1:00 pm. Lunches are provided by the school though funding from the DEIS programme. More details to follow in September.
- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. Make sure that she gets to bed early, and has a good night sleep.
- Do not compare your child adversely with other children in her learning. All children progress at different stages.
- Children in Junior Infants will not receive homework for the first few weeks. When they do start getting homework it is vital they receive one-to-one assistance whilst working on it, this will reinforce work being done in school.
- Avoid criticising the teacher in your child's presence. Remember it is important that your child has a positive attitude toward him/her.

- Your child is not going to be a model of perfection all the time-thankfully! Try to have patience with her shortcomings and praise for her achievements.
- Children often "forget" messages or relay them incorrectly, so please, check your child's bag each night for notes.
- If sending payment to school for any expense, please put the money/cheque in an envelope labelled with the child's name, the amount enclosed and the purpose.
- You will receive a list outlining the books and other materials your child will need for the year. We would appreciate it if the money for Book Rental and arts/crafts/photocopying was paid before end of September. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings. These include: school tours, photographs, musical events, fundraising etc.

### **Developing the Command of Spoken Language.**

It is important that your child's ability to talk is as advanced as possible. It is through speech that she communicates thoughts and feelings, 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 prevented, 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 she may be doing: at home, in the shop, in the car, etc.
- Remember that all the time she is absorbing the language heard. It takes a little while longer to make it her own, and to use it in speech.
- Try to make time to listen when she wants to tell you something. 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? These demand more advanced language structures.

## **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 negative. Please be very careful that anything you say does not give a negative attitude to your child.

We want 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. They must learn Irish so let them enjoy it, and master it to the best of their abilities.

There are some useful Irish phrases available for parents on the school website.

## **First Steps in Reading**

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 your 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.

### **You can help:**

- 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.

- Have attractive colourful books in the home. Read a variety of stories to your child. She will begin to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading. Look at the pictures with her, and talk about them.
- Read her nursery rhymes. She may learn them off by heart.
- Sing the alphabet song with your child, so that she has at least heard of the letters. If she knows what each one looks like, even better!
- Take her to the library.
- Above all, don't push with early reading. Children progress when they're ready. You don't want to turn her off reading for life!

## **Understanding Maths**

Maths for the small child has nothing to do with "sums", figures, 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.

- 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 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.
- Your child gets to understand Maths best by handling and investigating and using real objects. This has been her natural method of learning since birth.

## 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. This requires good hand-eye co-ordination, as well as hand and finger muscle development.

### You Can Help...

- She must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get her toys requiring manipulation like: (a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc (b) Plasticene (Marla) to make her own shapes (c) A colouring book and thick crayons (d) Sheets of paper that she can cut up with a safe scissors
- When she begins to use a pencil make sure that she holds it correctly at the start. It is difficult to change bad habits later!
- She may be making capital letters at home even before coming to school. This is fine but she will start by making lower case letters at school. It can cause confusion when children have learned their names in capitals, and teacher shows them "names" that look different!
- You will be sent details of our school's handwriting methods, so that we all encourage the same system. Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is your child's definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change it.

## Other Areas of the Curriculum

The child in Junior Infants learns a lot through many activities, which do not need any elaboration here. General development is enhanced through Art & Craft, P.E., Music, SESE 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 have referred to already, the child will benefit from telling you things she has discovered, and practising at home what she has learned at school.

## Social skills

- We encourage good manners at all times: saying please and thank you, addressing teachers properly, being courteous to fellow students and teachers.
- It is important to ask your child with whom she played at school to ensure she's not alone. It is also important to encourage mixing rather than being dependent on one friend only.
- Rough behaviour is discouraged in the playground. If a problem arises between pupils, they are encouraged to tell the supervising teacher, and not take matters into their own hands.
- As time progresses your child will get used to the general discipline of the classroom. She will get to understand very quickly that an instruction from the teacher must be obeyed promptly and without question.
- It is important that parents reinforce positive social behaviour at home also.

## Teacher and Parent

During 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 him/her at a time when you both can have a little peace and quiet. Please check your child's schoolbag for notes from teacher. Most information is sent home in this way.

## **Easy Does It!**

There are lots of ideas and suggestions in this little booklet 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!" 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"**