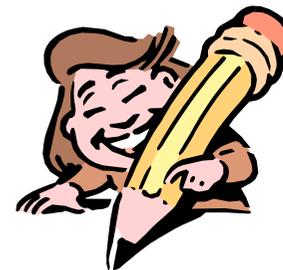


Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí

**Booklet for Parents of Infants Starting
School at Scoil Bhríde, Cill Bhríde**



Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

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 you parents and we the 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 and we welcome this. 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 introductory stage in Junior Infants.

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

***Julie Dowd
Príomhoide***

Dates:

23rd May—Parent Information evening 7:30pm

19th June: Open Day for Infants

Contacts:

Julie Dows, Principal

Sheila Dempsey, Deputy Principal

Bernie Fletcher Secretary

Phone Number 01 8216359

Email: info@scoilbhridens.ie

Extra Curricular Activities

Monday	Sewing	Pat Ryan 087-9584051	3—4pm
Tuesday	German 5th / 6th Classes	Sinead 087-3116658	3—4pm
Wednesday	Theatre School	Norma 085-7712095	4p.m to 6p.m.
Thursday	Speech & Drama	Karen 087- 9081381	Transfer from class 2—4pm
Friday	Folk Group	Imelda, 087- 2802218	Lunch-time 1:00—1:15pm
Friday	Artzone	Paul 086-8286937	Transfer from Class 2—4.15pm

Before Your Child Starts...

You should ensure that they are 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 would help greatly if they are able to-

- **Button and unbutton a coat** and hang it up.
- **Use the toilet without help** and manage trouser buttons.
- Please also **encourage personal hygiene** and cleanliness.
- Use a tissue when necessary.
- **Share** toys and playthings with others and “take turns.”
- **Tidy up** and put away playthings.
- Remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If they have had this experience, then separation when they start school will not cause any great anxiety.



‘Preparing for the ‘First Day’

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

Tell them about school beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome and they 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 light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.

They like to have the new uniform and new bag when they begin. These help them identify more readily with the school and other children.

Your child’s books will be taken from them, 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 they think they will never see the books again. **All copies must be marked with your child’s name. Books must be covered with clear plastic and your child’s name written on the outside. Label all of your child’s clothes and belongings.**

Your child will need :-

- A school bag large enough to hold an A4 folder
- Easy to open lunch box which should **be put** into the school bag—**there is no need for a separate lunch bag.**
- Drinks container—please choose this carefully, so many of these lock far too easily. It is also a good idea if the schoolbag has a side pocket which will hold the drinks bottle.
- Coat which is easy to close/zip
- A small hand towel : a face cloth changed daily is ideal. Please put these in a hygiene bag with a strap/loop attached. There is a hook in the children’s toilet for this purpose
- There is no need for your child to bring pencils etc– these will be supplied in school

illness. Please inform the teacher if your child has head lice as a standard letter will be sent to all parents. Check your child’s hair regularly – keeping long hair tied up.

If you have a concern about your child share it with the class teacher in the first instance. While there may be a classroom assistant as part of the teaching team **all queries and concerns are to be directed to your child’s class teacher.**

Parting Thoughts

Following Instructions. Bit by bit the 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.

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 them in a systematic way. But if you find from time to time that they enjoy 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.

No Toys in School.

They distract other children

They can cause distress if lost or broken.

Occasionally children may be asked to bring in something as an aid to phonics, nature table or maths.

These would be displayed in an appropriate place and returned to the children after the lesson.

Birthdays

No party foods to be brought to school – party bags, sweets cakes etc.

While we are aware that it may be inconvenient **do not issue party invitations** on the school grounds, or ask teachers or SNA's to do so.

This is to avoid a situation where children in a class feel 'left out' when invitations are issued. Anything organised in school involves all pupils being treated equally and issuing selective invitations is contrary to this.

This applies to Christmas cards, gifts, post holiday souvenirs, First Communion cards and presents.

Communication

You will have been asked to fill out a contact form listing alternative contact numbers in case of emergency. Please notify the school if the details change – address, doctor, numbers. If you wish to discuss an issue with the teacher please do so by making an appointment through the office

Bags – Home School Link

Check your child's bag every day for notes, homework or just to see what your child is doing at school. This can act as a touchstone for talking to your son/daughter about school

Illness/Hair

A Few Important Rules/Reminders

There is no need to ring school if your child will not be in. An absence note is needed on their return. These will be issued in September, Inform the teacher if your child has chicken pox or any other infectious

Your Child's First Day at School.

Coming in at 10am on the first day:-

- Please be as casual as possible.
- Parents and children enter through the side door into the hall.
- There will be a member of staff there to greet you.
- Children will be called in groups of 6 taken by a resource teacher to the Infant room.
- Assure your child you will be back on time to collect them. Say goodbye to them as they leave. There will be a cup of coffee available to minimise your trauma once all the children have gone to class.
- There will be activities for the children in the classroom. They will probably do some drawing, a song or rhyme and some games. The morning will pass quickly.
- You can collect your child at 12 o'clock at the side entrance in the car park.
- There is always a formal hand-over of children at dismissal time.
- They will go home for two weeks at 12 noon but they will start at 9.20 from the second day of school.



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 teachers. They are experienced and resourceful and are 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 anxiety.
- When you have reassured them, leave as quickly as possible. The teacher can distract and humour them 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.



Going Home

The teacher will bring out the lines to the door. Please wait until your child is at the top of the line. Don't call them out. Please inform us in writing who is collecting your child. If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed ensure you tell the child and the teacher. Be sure to **collect him/her on time**. Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.

Other Areas of the Curriculum

The child in Juniors learns a lot through many other activities, which do not need any elaboration here. Their general development is enhanced through Visual Arts, P.E., Music, Nature 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 they 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 teacher properly, being courteous to fellow pupils and teachers. It is important to ask you child whom they played with at school and to ensure they aren'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 some school policies on our website (<http://www.scoilbhridents.ie>)

Full school uniform is to be worn each day except on P.E. days which are Tuesdays and Thursdays for Infants. Shoes are also part of the uniform. Runners are for P.E days only.

Label everything belonging to your child – this applies until the end of their school life.

Trolley Bags.

No trolley bags.

Spare Clothes.

Keep spare pants and socks in your child's bag all year. Keep a small towel in a hygiene bag.

Shoes.

Please do not buy shoes/runners with laces. Velcro or buckles are much more suitable.

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 the 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, if you can. 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....

They must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together.

- This is very important. Get them manipulating toys like Jigsaws, Lego, Beads to thread etc.
- Plasticine (Marla) to make their own shapes
- A colouring book and thick crayons
- Sheets of paper that they can cut up with a safe scissors.
- Don't discourage left-handedness.

The Year moves on..

- School begins at 9.20a.m. They go home at 2.00p.m. Please make sure that your child is collected at 2.00p.m as the teacher needs that hour between 2.00p.m. and 3.00p.m to prepare for the next day. **Get them into the habit of being in good time for school from the beginning.** Mid-morning break: 11.00a.m. to 11.15a.m. Lunch break is at 12.45p.m.
- Children need plenty of rest after the effort and excitement of a day at school. You should ensure that they get to bed early and have a good night's sleep.
- When they have settled in and hopefully, look upon school, as a "home from home" do continue to show interest in daily adventures Give them an ear if they wants to tell you things-but don't pester them with questions.
- If their progress is slow do not compare them adversely with other children while they are listening. **Loss of self-esteem can be very damaging.**
- Be careful too about criticising the teacher in their presence. Remember that she is the parent figure while at school and for their own well being it is important that they have a good positive image of teacher.
- The last caution applies to their image of the school as well. **Their school is always "the greatest" – whatever its faults.**
- They are not going to be a model of perfection all the time – thankfully. You should try to have patience with their shortcomings and praise for their 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 requisites your child will need for the year. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings.

Packed Lunches

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. Children are not normally very hungry at school, so a little snack will do.

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, 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.

Drinks



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 they use in understanding and talking about certain things in his/her daily experience e.g.

- They associate 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 their natural method of learning since they were babies. This at times can be a nuisance but if it allows them to do the learning themselves the final result is well worth it.



First Steps in Reading:

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 them a variety of stories from time to time. They will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- You must convey to them gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.
- Look at pictures with them and talk to them about what they say.
- Read them nursery rhymes. They will learn them off their own bat. Don't try to push them.
- **Above all, don't push them with their early reading. You may turn them against it for ever.**
- 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 they have at least heard of the letters. If they know what each one look like, all the better. Your child will be doing 'Jolly Phonics' and we have adopted a Shared Reading approach to reading up to and including Second Class.

Water
Milk, including low fat
Fruit juices
High juice squashes, i.e. low sugar content
Yoghurt.

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. **No** sweets/bars/crisps/popcorn or fizzy drinks.

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 a glass of milk at lunch, encourage him or her to have a carton of yoghurt or a small helping of cheese instead.

Allergies

There is a growing concern about children and allergies. We have a pupil in the school with severe nut and kiwi allergies.

Do not include nuts or foods with traces of nuts in your child's lunch box in case of what it might trigger off.

Please do not send in nuts or kiwis. We appreciate your co-operation.



Some Important Areas of Early Learning

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, developing social skills, 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.

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 they communicate their thoughts and feelings, their needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If they 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 they may be doing at home, in the shop, in the car, etc. Remember that all the time they are absorbing the language they hear about them. It takes them a while to make it their own and to use it for their own needs.
- Try to make time to listen when they want to tell you something that is important to them. But don't always make them the centre of attention.
- Answer genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture the sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Introduce them gently to the ideas of Why? How? When? Where? If? These demand more advanced language structures.
- They will have their own particular favourite stories that they never tire of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get them to tell them to you.