

# Information Booklet



for  
Parents of Infants  
Starting Achonry  
N.S

## Foreword

**Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste.**

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 their 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 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. 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

- 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.
- Getting each child to **accept the general order**, which is necessary for the class to work well.

## 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-

- **Zip/Button and unzip/unbutton their coat** and hang it up.
- **Use the toilet without help** and manage pants buttons
- **Also encourage personal hygiene** and cleanliness. Your child should know to flush the toilet and wash their hands, without having to be told. It would also be a good idea to be familiar with hand-dryers (used in Achonry N.S.)
- Use tissues when necessary (please ensure the children have a pack of pocket size tissues in their bag at all times).
- **Share** toys and playthings with others and "take turns".
- **Tidy up** and put away their playthings.
- Remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour. If your child/ren have these experiences, then separation from their parents/guardians when they start school will not cause them any great anxiety.

## Preparing for the 'Big 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 for them.**

- **Tell them about school** beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome for them 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 be very cross with you" though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.
- The 'taster day' will allow your child/ren an opportunity to become familiar with the classroom/school environment, teacher, principal and others.
- They will like to have **their new uniform and their new bag** when they begin. These help the children identify more readily with the school and other children.
- Some of your child's books will be taken from them, 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 books/copies must be marked with your **child's name on the front cover.**

## School Opening and Closing Times

School commences at 9.15 a.m. and the infant day finishes at 1.55 p.m.



## Breaks:

There are two breaks during the day, a short one from 11.00 to 11.20 and a longer break from 12.50 to 1.20.

## Going Home

- Be sure to **collect your child on time**. Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
- If for any reason you may be delayed please ring the school and inform the class teacher. This will avoid any un-necessary upset at home time.
- If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed ensure you tell the child and the teacher.

## Healthy Eating Policy

### **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).

**We will ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.** Also, please, only give your child something you feel they can easily manage to eat. Children are not always very hungry at school, so a moderate size lunch will do.

**Also please use child friendly lunch boxes and drink bottles and ensure that your child can open and close them.**

**ACHONRY NATIONAL SCHOOL IS A WALNUT/PECAN FREE SCHOOL DUE TO HEALTH AND SAFETY REASONS**

(See our Healthy Eating Policy in the About our School Booklet - School Policies)



## Meetings

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.

A one-to-one meeting will be arranged for each parent within the first 5/6 weeks. This meeting will give both parents and teacher an opportunity to discuss how your child/ren is/are settling in. Formal written reports are sent at the end of the school term.

### Information Bulletins:

Please keep an eye on your child's lunch box and school-bag as they may contain notes for parents. Information will also be sent via text, email and letter and through the Aladdin App.

### Clothes:

The children wear the standard uniform. Please ensure that all clothes likely to be removed i.e. coats, hats, scarves, gloves, jumpers etc. are clearly labelled with your child's full name as many children possess similar items. We have some spare clothes and underwear for use if needed however if your child has any toilet problems please let the teacher know and send in a spare set of clothes for emergencies.

We do not recommend trousers with clasps or belts which may be difficult to open (elastic is best). We recommend shoes with velcro straps as they are easy for the infants to manage.

Please avoid wearing jewellery(e.g.chains/earrings/bracelets) this can be a distraction and to avoid damage and possible injury during break times and P.E.

Collectibles (e.g. football/ Pokémon cards, miniature figures, key rings etc.) are not permitted in school.



### Handling the Upset Child

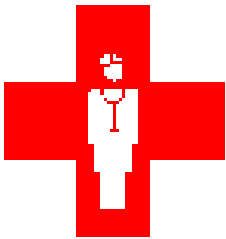
In spite of the best efforts of both teacher and parents a small number of children can become upset. If your child happens to be one of them don't panic. Patience and perseverance can work wonders.

### 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 this can transfer to the child and cause anxiety.

- When you have reassured your child, leave as fast as possible. The teacher can distract and humour them more easily when you are not around.
- Ring 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 just give plenty of reassurance and encouragement.

### Health and Safety:



As part of our school health programme we encourage regular washing of hands, particularly around eating time and after toilet use. We are not however always able to oversee this so please remind your child of its importance.

Unfortunately germs and viruses spread very quickly in a classroom environment so it is vital that the children are encouraged to use a tissue when blowing their nose and to cover their mouth and turn away when coughing. Occasionally there may be an outbreak of headlice, if this does occur you will be informed via text message and or written informative material. In order to keep such outbreaks to a minimum we would ask that you check your child's hair on a regular basis and to keep long hair tied up.

## Developing their Command of Spoken Language.

It is important that the child's ability to talk is as advanced as possible remembering the individuality of each child. 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 or become frustrated 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 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 their genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture their sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Introduce them gently to the ideas of why? How? When? Where? If? etc. 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.

### **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 first reader.

We very deliberately do not rush or push children into reading, each child will learn at his/her own pace. 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 the 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 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 they have at least heard of the letters. If they know what each one looks like, all the better.

## Getting Ready For Writing

Making letters on paper is not easy for a small child as they 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...

- They must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Get them manipulating toys like:
  - (a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc.
  - (b) Plasticene (Marla) to make their own shapes
  - (c) A colouring book and thick crayons
  - (d) Paper that can be cut up with a safe scissors
- When they begin to use a pencil make sure that they hold it correctly at the start. It will be

difficult to change them later. Information will be sent home about this.

- They may be making capital letters at home even before they come to school. This is fine. But when they start making lower case letters at school you should try to get them to discontinue the captals and practise the new system whenever they feels like it. Consult the teacher about this.
- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is their definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change them.

## 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 children use in understanding and talking about certain things in their 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 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 a baby. This at times can be a nuisance but if it allows them to do the learning themselves 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.

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 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.

### **Other Areas of the Curriculum**

Your child will continue to learn through all areas of the curriculum. Their general development is enhanced through S.E.S.E/S.P.H.E Art & Craft, P.E., Music and 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 have learned at school. They can then make their own contribution to the usual family prayers.

## Social Skills

**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.

## Parting Thoughts

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.

### 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 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.

**“Mol an óige, agus tiocfaidh sí”**



