

# Parent Guidelines for New Junior Infants



**St Marnock's N.S.**

## Preparing for Junior Infants

Starting school is an exciting milestone for every child. It can also be a daunting experience with new classmates, a new environment and a new teacher. Here are a few tips to help your child to prepare for Junior Infants:

### **1. Be Positive**

Many children this year have been out of preschool due to Covid-19. Remind your child of all the fun that he/she had in preschool. Point out the school as you pass. Share positive stories of school experiences. Reassure your child that it is ok if they are anxious about this new phase in their life.

### **2. Encourage Independence**

The more that your child can do for themselves, the more confident and secure he/she will be in the classroom. Reassure your child that if he/she cannot do something to ask for help.

Ensure that your child can:

- Take off and put on coats and jumpers (turning inside-out sleeves the correct way if necessary).
- Open and close bags and lunchboxes.
- Use the bathroom completely independently.
- Blow his/her nose.
- Wash hands properly.
- Recognise his/her name with a capital letter at the start and lowercase thereafter.
- Take turns
- Make a simple request eg for help/clarification.

### **3. Be Prepared**

- Now is the time to set up a bedtime routine so it is well established by September.
- Label all items of clothing/belongings that your child will bring to school.
- Your child's schoolbag should be large enough to fit his/her lunchbox, a small towel for drying hands and an A4 folder.
- Uniforms should have elasticated waist trousers and velcro shoes (**no laced shoes unless your child can tie laces**).
- On the first day, promote a calm environment and enjoy the momentous day!

### **4. Friends**

- Your child will meet many new faces in as they settle into school life.
- It would be helpful to arrange playdates or attendance at summer camps with some of your child's new classmates so they will have a familiar face on the first day.
- Please do not worry if your child does not know anybody from their class, they are often the child with the most friends at the end of the first week.
- We have many strategies in place to help children to mix with their peers both in the classroom and on the yard eg Buddy Bench, changing places in the class, games to promote friendship etc.
- We encourage children to look out for their classmates on yard and to play together in a safe way.
- We model the act of joining a game saying 'Lets play...' rather than asking 'Can I play?' as this is more likely to have a positive inclusive outcome.

### **5. Play**

Provide your child with plenty of opportunities to play.

- Play can develop gross motor skills. Core strength is essential in developing early writing

skills. Examples of this would be throwing and catching, skipping, jumping and playground activities.

- Play can develop fine motor skills, for example, using beads, blocks and playdough. Children should be able to cut using child friendly scissors when starting school.
- Free play encourages the child's imagination. Examples of this would be role play (playing shop/house, puppets etc)
- Group and pair play develops communication, problem solving and turn taking. An example of this would be playing board games.
- Play can develop creativity. For example, designing a house using lego, using cardboard boxes to create a city.

## **6. Language Development/Communication Skills**

If you have any concerns about your child's speech or language development, your GP/Health Centre is the first step in securing additional support. The waiting list for Speech Therapy is quite long so you should apply as soon as possible.

- Help your child to develop the listener/speaker relationship through conversations, asking questions (eg about his/her bedtime story)
- Encourage your child to use full sentences and to make requests properly.
- Recite nursery rhymes.
- Discuss daily activities to promote oral sequencing.

Children vary a lot in their pre-school experience. Some come to school knowing all their letter sounds, some can add and subtract numbers. Some children may have even begun to read. Don't worry if your child does none of the above. We do not expect our Junior Infants to come to school in September with any of these skills mastered. What we like to see are happy, confident children who are enthusiastic and eager to learn.

## **The First Year**

**At the moment, we are awaiting instruction from the Department of Education and Skills. As soon as we have a clear picture of what the new school year will look like, we will be in touch with you.**

### **Communication:**

If there is anything that the school need to know to make your child's transition to primary school easier please let the school know in advance. For example:

- *Illness* eg. allergies, asthma.
- *Physical* eg. Vision, speech or sight issues
- *Emotional* eg. Moving home, changes in family life, new baby

**If your contact details eg. Phone number, email address, alternative emergency contact changes please inform the school as soon as possible.**

Please do not hesitate to contact the teacher if you have a query. If you wish to have a more detailed discussion please make an appointment in advance to reduce loss of teaching time. A formal Parent Teacher Meeting is arranged in Term 2.

### *Class Dojo:*

At the start of the school term, the teacher will give each pupil a code to join Class Dojo. The Class Dojo app can be downloaded onto a phone. Class Dojo is a multifunctional tool used in Junior

Infants to:

- Communicate information eg PE days, upcoming events, lost property.
- Share photos and videos of classroom life with parents on a private, class-only newsfeed.
- Facilitate private communication between a parent and the teacher.
- Behaviour monitoring: Each child is assigned an editable Avatar (Dojo Monster) and can earn points for following class rules.

### **Break-time:**

- We have a healthy eating policy in the school.
- Children have 2 breaks daily.
- Please provide a range of small snacks
- Do not pressure your child to finish his/her lunch.
- Sharing of lunches is not permitted due to allergies.
- Children bring home all rubbish/unfinished lunches as we are a Green School. This also lets you know what your child likes to eat.
- Please give your child a reusable bottle rather than a carton.
- Children are supervised outside for yard time on second break and eat inside afterwards. If the weather does not permit outside play, children stay in the classroom.

### **Home-time:**

- Children will be dismissed with their classmates at home time.
- Please be on time for collection and try to stay in the same location everyday so your child does not have to look for you.
- Children are not allowed to leave until the teacher can hand over the child to the person that responsible for his/her collection.
- Tell your child in advance of any change in the person that will be waiting to collect them at home-time. Make the teacher aware of these changes as well.
- Please inform the teacher if your child will be collected by After School Care eg Links/NZone, minders etc. Or is going home with another child for a play date.

### **Health and Safety:**

- Please keep your child at home if he/she is unwell. It can be very upsetting for a child if they are sick at school.
- As we are in the middle of a pandemic, we must be extra vigilant this year. We will follow NPHEP guidelines.
- Children are required to have their own towel (face-cloth sized) to prevent the spread of germs when hand drying. Please label this towel and change it regularly.
- Teachers cannot administer medications eg Calpol, antibiotics to children.
- If your child has a medical condition that needs medication during school hours, please inform the school as you will be required to fill out additional forms.
- Occasionally, your permission will be sought for HSE school based reasons eg. vaccinations, hearing and vision checks. Information will be sent home in advance of these events.

## **The First Day**

- Pack a small snack for break-time.
- Your child does not need to bring any toys or teddies we have lots of fun and educational toys in the classroom.
- Please be on time for school to start. Children line up in the school yard before school.

- Reassure your child that you will collect them after school finishes.
- Leave promptly so your child can settle and get to know his/her friends.
- Discuss the day with a positive attitude. For the most part children are not aware that they are learning. Rather than asking 'What did you learn today?' ask 'What did you do today?' Your child may still reply 'Nothing' and this is completely normal.
- Play based learning is used in the Junior Infant Classroom. Children are developing their language, motor skills, social and creative skills. You will find that they may be tired and perhaps cranky at the end of a busy day.
- We focus on positive behaviour in school and provide your child with visual cues for class rules and expectations to help them to conform to expectations.
- Don't worry - your child is in safe hands and we will do all that we can to make them feel secure in their new environment.

### **Additional Information**

Additional information will be sent in late September regarding the content of the Junior Infant Curriculum, homework routine (Jolly Phonics) etc.

The following link provides more support for parents of incoming Junior Infant Pupils

[https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/09/2019\\_TipsParents\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/09/2019_TipsParents_ENG.pdf)

*We look forward to meeting you and your child at the start of the 2020/21 school year. In the meantime stay safe.*