



2024



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Fáilte

Welcome

On behalf of all the teachers and staff of St Colmcille's JNS, we would like to extend a warm welcome to all our new Junior Infant pupils and to you, their parents.

The success and popularity of the school is due to the hard work of a dedicated staff, who are willing to embrace educational change, run with innovation and who recognise that happy children and the support of parents and Board of Management are essential to educational success.

We look forward to working with you and sharing in the exciting journey of your children's growth and development over the coming years and enabling your child to be happy and fulfilled with us.

Tá fáilte mór roimh gach tuismitheoir agus gach páiste!

(Every parent and every child is very welcome)

David Curtin

David Curtin Principal



Aoife Doyle Deputy Principal





Introduction

Starting school will be a 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 - 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 a happy one, a very good foundation will have been laid for fruitful school years ahead.

We know from experience that parents are very eager to help. 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 the introductory stage to Junior Infants. We trust that you will find it helpful and that your child will be happy and fulfilled with us.

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. We will be working on:

- Developing **oral language** and expression.
- **Sharpening their senses**, especially sight, hearing and touch.
- 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 sharing with other children.
- **Developing your child's social skills**
- Performing **tasks independently**
- Building your child's self-esteem and confidence and encouraging them to **be the best that they can be!**

Independence...

Please work towards your child being **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 were able to:

- Open and close their coat and hang it up.
- Use the toilet without help and manage trouser buttons.
- Flush the toilet and wash their hands independently.
- Use tissue when necessary.
- Work towards sharing toys with others and taking turns
- Tidy up and put away toys.

Before Your Child Starts...

Your child's first day at school is a happy day to remember for the rest of their lives. Here are some tips to help you to prepare!

- Talk about school. School is a happy place where there will be a big welcome for them and they will meet new friends.
- Watch some videos of the school on our school website www.stcolmcillesjns.ie and take a look at our Instagram page [@stcolmcillesjns](https://www.instagram.com/stcolmcillesjns) to get an idea of all of the fun that we have at school.
- You will have an opportunity in May to visit the school to purchase uniforms, to see a Junior Infant classroom and to go for a walk around the yard.
- When purchasing a school bag, please ensure that it is big enough to hold a large A4 folder and a lunchbox. Please do not get a schoolbag on wheels. Pencil cases are not required in infant classes.
- Please label ALL items of clothing with your child's name. There is a lost property box at reception.
- Velcro runners are preferred please!
- Your child will need a packed lunch for school. Please ensure that your child can open and close their lunch box unaided. Please see our healthy eating policy on our website – <https://www.stcolmcillesjns.ie/policies/> Children can bring a small treat on a Friday. We encourage children to bring home any uneaten food so that you can see what they have eaten.
- Please provide your child with water in a strong leakproof refillable bottle. Please note that all nut and nut products are forbidden from school due to allergies.

School Uniform

School uniforms are available to buy from the school all year round. Please see <https://www.stcolmcillesjns.ie/school-uniform/> for full details of prices, size guides and payment options.

The First Day of School

- You will find out your child's teacher at the end of August. Please bear with us as staff allocations are always subject to change. You will receive information regarding start times and drop off/collection points for Junior Infants in August also.
- In general, you will drop your child off at the main PE hall doors at the front of the school, following the one-way system. A teacher or SNA will bring your child to their line. Each class is allocated a cartoon animal and these are signposted throughout the school on route to the junior infant classrooms.
- Despite our best efforts, some children may be upset. Please trust the teacher. When you have briefly reassured your child, please leave as quickly as possible. The teacher can distract and humour them more easily when your child can't see you. Check back discretely in a short while if you need to.
- Your child will make their way with their new class to the classroom. They will receive a name tag and settle in to play. We will provide all books, copies, stationary and materials for your child.
- Children will attend school for a shorter day for the first few days. Exact times will be confirmed in August.

The School Day

8.40am Children enter the school at 8:40am there is a 10 minute arrival time. School Gates open; Junior Infants will enter via the front gates and proceed through the hall to their classroom.

8.50 Teaching begins

10.10-10.20 Children eat their lunch in their classrooms.

11.30-12.00 Children play in the yard.

12.00-12.05 Children have a fruit/water break.

1.30pm Junior & Senior Infants go home*.

*Please ensure that the class teacher knows who is collecting your child each day.

Children will learn English, Irish and Maths every day. They will have PE twice a week. Your child's teacher will inform you of the PE days early in September. Children will study SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education), SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), Visual Arts, Music, Drama and Religion. They will also continue with play-based learning under the Aistear framework. Simple homework will begin in Term 2 for your child. You can find out more about the Junior Infant curriculum here:

<https://ncca.ie/en/resources/aistear-the-early-childhood-curriculum-framework/>

https://ncca.ie/en/resources/helping_your_child_in_junior_and_senior_infants-1/

Getting Ready to Learn!

Oral Language Development

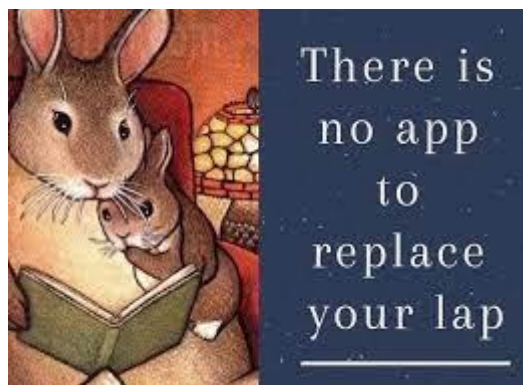
It is through speech that children communicate their thoughts and feelings, needs and desires, curiosity and wonder.

- 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 children are absorbing the language they hear around them. It takes them a while to make it their own and use it to express their needs.
- Try to make time to listen when your child wants to tell you something that is important to him/her.
- Introduce a child gently to Why? How? When? Where? If? etc. Asking questions demands more advanced language structures.

First Steps in Reading

The ability to read is the foundation for all future learning. However, learning to read is a gradual process and much preparatory work must be completed before a child is introduced to a 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 for pleasure!

- Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Join Ballyroan Library, we are very lucky to have such an excellent library in our locality.
- Read to your child **daily**.
- Children have their own particular favourite stories that they never tire of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get your child to tell you the story.
- Look at the pictures with your child and ask questions.
- Recite nursery rhymes regularly with your child until they are known off by heart. **Nursery rhymes are essential for early literacy and for phonological awareness.**
- Sing the alphabet song with your child.
- Above all, don't push with early reading. Focus on fostering a lifelong love of reading in your child.
- Minimize screen time if possible.



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 a child uses in understanding and talking about certain things in his/her daily experience e.g. colours, prepositions, matching, sorting and patterns.

- During your ordinary daily routine in the home, in the shop, you could try to 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, etc.
- Children associate certain numbers with things – two hands, four wheels, five fingers etc. Reference this as often as possible.
- Regular counting and number rhymes are essential for numeracy development
- Setting the table daily and helping with kitchen tasks, baking etc.
- Drawing attention to shapes in the home and the environment.
- The child’s understanding of Maths is best developed by handling, investigating and using real objects.

Writing & Fine Motor Skills

In junior infants, we do a lot of work on developing children’s fine motor skills. Children must learn to hold the pencil properly and make regular shapes. Their hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage. Encourage your child to develop their fine motor skills with:

- Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc.
- Playdough to make his/her own shapes.
- A colouring book and thick crayons. (In school, we use chubby crayons for most of the first year)
- Sheets of paper that he/she can cut up with a safe scissors.
- We encourage the children to use the **tripod grip** (pictured) when holding their pencil. Please practice this at home as it can be difficult to change once children get used to holding the pencil incorrectly!
- We use cursive writing from Junior infants in St.Colmcille’s JNS. Research shows that cursive writing enhances speed, prevents reversals, and improves overall reading skills. You will be informed, in due course, of the exact language used when teaching the cursive letters to ensure consistency between school and home.
- With practice, your child will develop properly formed letters which will eventually lead to fluent cursive writing. This skill will be fostered throughout the Junior School.



Gaeilge

Children love learning their new language in Junior Infants and pick it up very quickly. Please encourage your child to use their cúpla focal daily:

- Get your mála scoile (schoolbag)
- Pass the bainne (milk)
- Oíche mhaith (good night)

We use the Abair Liom programme. You can access some helpful tips for parents here: <https://www.folens.ie/books-and-programmes/primary/abair-liom-parent-resources/digital-resources/ji>

Other Areas of the Curriculum

Children's development is enhanced through Arts and Crafts, Music, Drama, PE, History, Geography and Science, and Religious Education. Please note that when teaching the SPHE/RSE Curriculum, we refer to all body parts by their correct anatomical name.

Additional Educational Needs

- All schools have a teaching allocation to meet the needs of pupils with additional educational needs.
- Our school has access to a psychologist from NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) and, subject to resources, she provides support to pupils, parents, and teachers -including very limited availability to perform psychological assessments of pupils.
- If your child has an additional need, please discuss this with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Special Education Co-Ordinator as soon as possible, if you haven't already done so.

Health and Safety

- Please ensure that parent and guardian **contact details** are correct and up to date on Aladdin Connect.
- You must inform the class teacher if your child has any **allergy** or ongoing **condition** of any kind.
- In case of very serious life-threatening **medical conditions**, it is important that you inform the Principal or Deputy Principal. Any necessary precautions, instructions or interventions should be given in writing to the Principal and class teacher.
- Parents should check their child's hair for **head lice** on a regular basis as it tends to be an ongoing problem in schools. A head lice infestation is not the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/head-lice-nits/>

Administration of Medicines

To facilitate the safe administration of medicines it is important that:

- Parents must complete an Indemnity form to allow staff to give the required medication. (Indemnity Forms are available in the office.)
- For safety reasons **Pupils are not allowed** to have medications on their person under any circumstances.
- All medications must be given to the teacher or office staff.
- Self-medication by pupils is not permitted unless written approval is given by the child's GP and the Principal, and the self-medication must be supervised by the class teacher or one of the office staff.
- If a pupil has an epipen, **two epipens** are required to be given to the school – one to the class teacher and one to the office staff. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that epipens are replaced before expiry date.

Child Protection

Our Board of Management recognises that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations. Our school is fully compliant with the statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection of children.

We have a statutory obligation to report all child protection concerns to Tusla. For a full copy of our child safeguarding statement please check our school website.

Our designed Liaison person is David Curtin, our Deputy Designated Liaison person is Aoife Doyle.

Attendance

- The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 requires the school to keep attendance records for all students and to inform the Child and Family Agency's educational welfare services if a child is absent for more than 20 days in a school year.
- Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time. It can be difficult for them to catch up on work later on. As a result, they may fall behind with school work and lose confidence in their abilities. We strongly advise that parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If you intend taking your child out of school for holidays you will need to sign a form to that effect. The form- Holiday Absence Form - is available in the school office.

Aladdin Connect – This is the platform used for school communion with parents. Before your child commences the school office will be in contact with details on the set up and instruction on use of the app.

You can contact your child's teacher on the Aladdin Connect app. Teachers will read and respond to messages between the hours of **8am and 3.30pm**. Please do not contact teachers outside of these hours. For any urgent queries, please contact the school office on 014947422 or office@ccjns.ie.

Home-School Communication

Please use the Aladdin Connect app to contact your child's teacher. Junior Infant Parents will have a parent teacher meeting in February. You will receive a written report in June. If you wish to meet the class teacher to discuss a concern, it is advisable to ring or email the school office to make an appointment (giving your child's name; your name and contact details; and a brief outline of the nature of the concern). It may not always be possible for the teacher to meet you on the same day, but they will endeavour to meet you as soon as possible.

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.

Our School Motto is to

“Be The Best That You Can Be”

