

Introduction

Welcome all parents to a new and exciting stage in your child's life! During this year, your child will make new friends and enjoy a variety of new experiences. We, as a staff, look forward to having the opportunity to work with each of you as partners to ensure that at the end of this year and all through their schooling in Scoil Nuachabháil, your child will have a positive attitude towards education based on social, emotional and academic performance.

To help your child settle at Scoil Nuachabháil...

You should ensure that your child is **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.

Encourage independence by teaching your child:

- **To put on, take off and hang up his/her coat**
- **Use the bathroom when he/she needs to 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.
- **Use their tissue** when necessary.
- **Share** toys and playthings with others and "take turns".
- **Tidy up** and put away their playthings.
- **To open and close his/her school bag.**
- Also it is very useful if your child is able to **identify and write their name.**

Having a lunch box and drink bottle that opens easily and shoes with Velcro will help your child to be independent at school.

Please check that your child's school bag is big enough to fit school books as not all school bags are big enough to fit some workbooks or your child's A4 homework folder (this folder is supplied by the school)

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.**
- They will like to have **their new uniform and their new bag** when they begin. These help your child identify more readily with the school and other children. **Please ensure your child's school bag is large enough to fit an A4 homework folder (this folder is supplied by the school)**
- 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 informed of this fact;** in case they think they will never see the books again. **All books/copies must be marked clearly on the front cover with your child's name.**

The Big Day



Coming in...

The first day at school can be an emotional time for child and parent. Trust us!!! Your child's safety and happiness are our priority. When you arrive at the school, **be as casual as you can.** If you are feeling upset, don't show it. Your child will meet their teacher and other children in the yard. Having assured your child you will be back to collect them, wish them goodbye and **leave without delay.**

If your child is upset, again trust the teacher! Your child will be shown to their classroom by the teacher. Hopefully they will be absorbed in their new surroundings and settle in.

In the event of a child not settling in a parent may accompany their child to the classroom to assist their child in settling in. Generally the child is distracted by the classroom environment allowing the parent to slip away.

Going home...

- Be sure to **collect them on time.** Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
- If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed ensure you tell the child and the teacher.
- Encourage your child to talk about his/her day at school. If you ask, "What did you learn today?" you will probably be told "nothing". Most of the work at Infant level is activity based and children are not conscious of learning, as adults understand it. Instead of questions like "What happened?" ask instead "What did you do?", "Did you sing?", "Did you colour?" With questions like these you will have more success. Work with your child when they start to have homework.

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 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 their anxiety.
- When you have reassured them, leave 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 for a short time-even ten minutes. They must never feel that they are winning the psychological battle of wills.

School Day

- School begins at 9:00am. **It is important that the children develop the habit of being punctual for school.** Children who are in the yard prior to official assembly time are not the responsibility of any member of staff, but if children are in the yard prior to 9:00am they are expected to take their place in line. Children are not allowed to enter the school building prior to 9:00am unless allowed in by a designated teacher.
- Mid-morning break: 10:40 to 10:50am.
- Lón: 12:20 to 12:50pm (12:20 to 12:30 eating in class, 12:30 to 12:50 playing)
- 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, looks upon school as a "home from home" do continue to **show interest in their daily adventures.** Give them an ear if they want to tell you things-but don't pester them with questions.
- Mind that you take some of their "stories" with a pinch of salt.
- 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 to them.**
- Be careful too about criticising their teacher in their presence. Remember that she is their mother figure while they are at school and for their own well being it is important that they have a good positive image of her.
- This last caution applies to their image of the school as well. **Their school is always "the greatest"-whatever its faults.**
- Children often "forget" or relay messages incorrectly, so **please, check your child's bag/homework folder each night for notes.**
- You will receive a book list outlining the books and other bits and pieces your child will need for the year. We would appreciate if the money for Art and Craft's and the money for photocopying were paid before the end of September. As the year goes on, there may be other demands on the purse strings, but they are optional. These include: School Photographs and School Trips

School Uniform

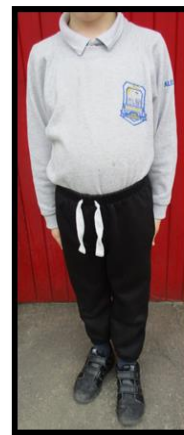
The *school uniform* is worn on all school days other than on days of PE lessons. You will be informed of your child's P.E. day in September.



Girl's School Uniform



Boy's School Uniform



P.E. Uniform

The following items may be purchased in many of the major department stores

School Uniform

- Black V-Neck Sweater
- Dark Grey Trousers
- Dark Grey skirt / Dark Grey pinafore.
- Grey Shirt / Grey Polo Shirt.
- School shoes – **be sure that your child can tie their shoes themselves.**

P.E. uniform

- Black tracksuit pants (**should not have logos displayed on them**).
- Grey crew-neck sweater with school crest (**no hoodies for health and safety reasons**)
- Grey Polo Shirt
- Runners

School Jumper and P.E. sweater must have an embroidered school crest. This will cost an extra €6. This service is only provided by Hennebery's Sports Centre, Tralee.

Student names **must be** written on tag as these can easily be mislaid. This will save endless confusion and loss of items during the year.

Healthy Lunches

Diet plays a big part in your child's behaviour. 'Treats' are best kept outside of school time. We promote a healthy eating policy in our school. We feel that it is important that infant children get into the habit of bringing good lunches to school. If everybody does this, it creates a fantastic healthy eating environment at school.

Packed Lunches

- Surveys have shown that children's lunches are often very unhealthy and not adequate nutritionally because they tend to be low in fibre and high in sugar.
- Lunch should provide one third of your child's food requirements for the day.
- The most effective way to plan a healthy lunch is to include one food from each of the food groups – one piece of fruit, milk/yoghurt, two slices of bread and meat/poultry/cheese. Children are encouraged to drink water.
- 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.
- **We would be grateful if your child's lunch box is marked clearly with your child's name.**
- Pupils are also asked to take home their litter in their lunch box. If your child does not finish their lunch, it will be sent home in their lunchbox.

Tips

- Ensure that your child has an easy-to-open lunch box and bottle
- Prepared fruit is easier for small children to handle e.g. peeling oranges at home for them
- Handling flasks is not practical for Juniors and Seniors, and is unsafe in the case of hot drinks

The following guide is designed to help you provide quick, appetising, and nutritious lunches for your children.

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
Quiche

Fruit & Vegetables

Apples, Banana, Peach, Plum,
Pineapple cubes, Mandarins,
Orange segments,
Grapes, Fruit Salad, Dried fruit, Tomato,
Cucumber, Sweetcorn, Celery.

Drinks

Water
Milk
Fruit Juices
High juice squashes i.e. low sugar content
Yoghurt

Please do not give your children:

Chocolate, cereal bars, chocolate yoghurts, jam, confectionary, hot chocolate, fizzy drinks, sweets, chewing gum or crisps for lunch.

SCHOOL RULES

Our school rules are as follows:

Please read and discuss with your child.

- Pupils must not be in the school grounds before 9:00am or after 2:40pm (**Juniors 1:40pm**). The Board of Management accepts no responsibility for pupils on school premises outside these stated times.
- Please advise pupils to remain INSIDE school gates until the person collecting them comes to the gate.
- Parents – Please remain outside school building when children are exiting. This will ensure their safety and yours. Parents: Remember, your child is on a busy road after exiting school grounds.
- From the beginning, Junior Infant pupils should be encouraged to come into the school building by themselves. This encourages independence.
- All pupils have the right to come and return from school without interference from other pupils.
- Our school has a friendly and trusting environment. This applies to everyone who enters – staff, parents and pupils.
- Bullying in any form is completely unacceptable.
- Under section 21 of The Education Act 2000, absences exceeding 20 days must be reported in the Annual Attendance Report by the principal. An explanatory note must be provided in the event of a child being absent for a day/days or part thereof. This may be sent via Aladdin Connect.
- Children may not leave school without an explanatory note.
- Any form of bad language is completely unacceptable.
- No crisps, cans, or chewing gum allowed. We have a Healthy Eating Policy which can be viewed by parents and encourage all towards a healthier more active lifestyle.
- Take home litter left from lunch.
- Homework must be checked and signed by parents.
- School uniform must be worn at all times.
- If class teacher is absent for any reason, the remaining staff member or substitute teacher has full authority to correct and discipline the pupil under their care.
- **If your child is feeling unwell in the morning, it is best not to send them to school.**
- Mobile phones are not allowed in school.
- If someone other than the parent or child minder is collecting your child please let us know in advance.

ATTENDANCE

- Rolls are called at 10am. A daily roll is taken in each class and filled into school roll books. Any child not present at the time of roll call is marked absent for that day.
- In the event of a pupil being **absent through illness or for any other reason**, the class teacher should be **informed via Aladdin Connect**. If it is anticipated that the absence will be

of a lengthy duration, the class teacher should be informed by note or a message on the phone as soon as possible.

- When it is necessary for a pupil to leave school early, a note must be sent to Class teacher. Parent/Guardian must sign them out at Office.
- Each child to whom the School Attendance Act applies (that is those between the ages of 6 and 16) is obliged by law to attend school every day on which the school is in operation unless there is a reasonable excuse for not attending. The school authorities are obliged to notify the School Attendance Officer when a child is absent regularly or if a reasonable excuse has not been provided for an absence by the child's parents.
- Parents will be notified by post once their child has been absent for 15 days in the course of the year.

HOME / SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

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.

Frequent communication is of vital importance in developing and nurturing co-operation between home and school. In our school, communication between parents and teachers may take one of the following forms:

- Individual consultation: This occurs where a parent has asked for a meeting with a teacher or has been invited to visit the school to exchange information or to discuss matters of concern. A note to the class teacher requesting such an appointment is always essential. It is also necessary that the purpose of the visit be stated so that teachers may undertake whatever preparation is necessary with regard to information and records.
- Appointment with Principal: If you wish to meet the principal please make an appointment through the office.
- Parent / teacher meeting for pupils are generally held during November
- We will send home digital reports at the end of the school year. Written reports are available on request.

In addition to the above forms of home / school links, the following means of communication are also utilised:

- The school website www.scoilnuachabhail.ie
- The Aladdin Connect system which, together with emails will ensure that everyone will be kept informed and up to date about news and events
- Notes in the pupil's homework folder.
- Email

Communication is a priority for us. If you have any other suggestions for making it more efficient and effective, please let us know.

PARKING AND ROAD SAFETY

Due to the heavy congestion around the school gates in the mornings the following arrangements have been decided:

- There is a **'Drop Zone'** area from the new gate down to the old gate, (the staff car entrance down to children's entrance).
- This area is for dropping off children only.
- If you need to stay for any reason, you must park your vehicle further down the road.
- If you are just dropping off children, you may pull up to the gate and help children out safely, then depart immediately.
- In the mornings parents may drive into the school grounds. A chipped driveway will allow parents to drive in a loop around the north side of the school to drop children off.
- When children arrive at school they are required to stand in their lines for their own safety.

PLEASE DO NOT PULL UP/OR PARK IN FRONT OF THE STAFF ENTRANCE – as this causes major hold ups on the road.

This arrangement helps to create a better 'flow' to the morning drop off of pupils. The cooperation of all parents will be needed for this to run smoothly.

It is **essential** that an adult is **at the school gate** to collect a child from **Junior or Senior infants** and accompany them to their car. They are too young to navigate the busy road and all the cars at pick up time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Children who are ill should not be sent to school.
- Parents are asked that teachers be made aware of any physical disability or allergies which their child might have.
- Please check your child's hair regularly for outbreaks of Head Lice. If there is an outbreak of head lice in a class, all parents of pupils in that class are informed by text, and asked to take immediate action to treat infestation.
- Requests to remain indoors at break times should only be made in exceptional circumstances (limbs in plaster, recovering from/awaiting surgery). These requests must be made in writing to the class teacher.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

- Accidents occur despite supervision. Minor injuries are treated at school. Slight cuts and grazes are normally treated by cleaning with cold water.
- In the event of an accident/child becoming ill, every possible effort will be made to contact the pupil's parents or the persons delegated to take responsibility for the pupil.
- The school should be notified immediately of changes in address or mobile phone number. Non co-operation in this matter could result in a delay in having your child attended to medically, should the need arise.
- Please ensure that alternative contact consent has been received and that they live locally.
- The school will not accept responsibility for any medical expenses incurred.

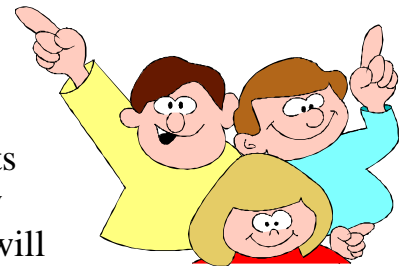
HOMEWORK

- As a general rule, every child is given homework Monday-Thursday. Parents are asked to ensure that their children complete the homework each night. In the event of the homework not being attempted or not being completed, teachers may insist that the homework is completed by the children during some of the breaks.
- Where exceptional circumstances prevent the completion of homework, please forward an explanatory note to the teacher.
- Do not do the child's homework for them. Work set for homework will have been prepared in class. Please check your child's homework for neatness and point out mistakes.
- Parents can help by making sure the child has a suitable time and place set aside for homework - with no distractions.
- Oral work is as important as written work. Please listen to the child read, and examine spellings and tables.
- Parents should check homework each night.
- As a general rule, homework is not given at the weekends.

Some Important Areas of Early Learning

Developing their 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 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 their first reader. In the first term the students will follow the Jolly Phonics programme to introduce them to the letter sounds and then progress on to blending the sounds before being formally introduced to reading books in the second term.

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. The County Library has a fantastic selection of books for young children and membership is free!!
- 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.



They

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:
 - a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc
 - b) Márla (Playdough) to make their own shapes
 - c) A colouring book and thick crayons
 - d) Sheets of paper or old magazines or catalogues (the Argos catalogue is great) that they can 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.
- They may be making block 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 blocks and practice their new system whenever they feel 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 they use in understanding and talking about certain things in their daily experience for example:

- 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.
- Matching/Sorting – objects of the same size/colour/texture/shape etc.
- Odd One Out – difference in size/colour etc.
- Days of the week

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 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.

Other Areas of the Curriculum

The child in infants learns a lot through many other activities, which do not need any elaboration here. Their general development is enhanced through Visual Arts, Music, Drama, P.E., SESE, SPHE 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.

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. It is important to ask your 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.**

Useful Websites

www.scoilnuachabhail.ie - Check our school website for regular updates and our school calendar

www.jollylearning.co.uk - Jolly Phonics the website corresponding to the phonics programme followed in the school

www.ncca.ie – Information for parents regarding the curriculum

www.oxfordowl.co.uk - Reading and maths resources which link to the shared reading scheme used throughout the school

www.helpmykidlearn.ie - This website is divided into age categories and provides lots of reading, writing and maths activities to do at home.

www.starfall.com – A website with games to teach phonics and interactive books to read.

Parting Thoughts

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.**

Ways to help the school

- We are very appreciative of the support which parents and pupils give to the school's fund raising activities.
- Take an active part in the Parents' Association.
- Remember – When you give time to the school, you help your child!
When you give time to your child, you help the school!



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”