

Welcome to St. Patrick's National School



Dear Parent/Guardian,

On behalf of all the staff of the school I would like to extend a very warm welcome to both you and your child to our school community. If you are new to the school, we thank you for choosing St. Patrick's National School for your child's primary education. If you are a returning parent, we welcome you back and appreciate your continued support and commitment to the school.

We understand that this is a very big milestone in your child's life and we hope their journey with us over the next number of years will be enjoyable, fruitful and rewarding. We acknowledge that you as parent are the primary educator of your child, and know your child best. Our aim is to develop a close partnership between home and school as we work together to ensure your child reaches their full potential while in our care.

Starting school can sometimes be a time of anxiety for parents and there are things that can be done to reduce such anxiety both for yourselves and your child. This preparation should begin months before your child starts and should be gradual.

Preparing for School

There is much that you can do to prepare with some useful tips listed here. Further tips can be found at: https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/09/2019_TipsParents_ENG.pdf

- Talk to your child about your own school days. (Focus on the positives)
- Emphasise the opportunities for making friends and getting involved in new activities. However, don't 'hype up' school life. Approach this talk with a calm attitude and treat it as normal.
- Introduce your child to another junior infant and if possible have him/her around to play during the holidays. It is important for your child to see some familiar faces on the first day.
- Children should be able to put on and take off coats and hang them up, use the toilet and flush it properly, wash their hands and tidy up their belongings. Play 'pretend school' with your child. Help them practice putting things in and out of the school bag and to open and close their lunchbox.
- Teach them to use a tissue, share toys and take turns.
- Label all your child's clothes and belongings clearly and help them to identify their own belongings.
- Encourage confidence by having them dress themselves. Allow them time for this in the morning.
- Don't criticise if things are not exactly to your liking, such as buttons that are not perfect or a tie that is slightly crooked.
- Praise their efforts at every opportunity.

Children cannot be independent if they cannot manage the equipment you provide. Give some thought to the items your child needs to get through the school day:

- We encourage the use of shoes with Velcro fastener for safety and ease of use.

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- Ask yourself whether or not your he/she can manage their clothes by themselves. Zips may be easier than buttons for example. Elasticated trousers can be easier than zips or buttons.
- Choose a lunch box and bottle that your child can open easily. Again, ensure that the school bag can hold these. School bags with a bottle holder on the outside are best as it reduces leaks inside the bag.
- Give some thought to the lunches too. If your child wants to bring oranges to school for example, only peeled oranges should be included.
- Try to get your child up a little earlier as this will ensure a stress free morning.

This pack contains information on the following areas, in hard copy, which we hope will be useful and informative and we would encourage you to familiarise yourself with the contents.

- Our Admissions Policy.
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment.
- Our Mission Statement.
- Strategy of School Attendance.
- Code of Behaviour.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Healthy Eating Policy.
- General Information about the school.
- Information relating to the school uniform.
- Booklist.
- Information relating to healthy lunches and sleep.

Our school website calryns.ie also contains additional policies not mentioned here which may be of interest to you. We will be adding further information and a resource page for parents of children starting school shortly. We also have a school Facebook page, [stpatricksns1](https://www.facebook.com/stpatricksns1), which is mainly used to share activities children take part in during the year. It contains pictures and sometimes video footage and is updated frequently. We encourage you to take a look.

The First Day

It is important that you establish a good routine early.

- Check that all items – uniform, bag – are ready for the morning. Do this in a calm fashion and don't have your child over-excited or anxious going to bed.
- Give plenty of time in the morning for dressing, washing, eating a good breakfast. It is important that your child arrives at school before class starts as children can find it intimidating to walk into a class already in progress.
- On the big day, if you are feeling upset, don't show it. Leave your child with the teacher. The teacher is experienced and knows how to comfort an anxious child.
- It is important that you arrive on time to collect your child from school. Children become upset if they see other children being collected and feel they are being left behind.

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- It takes time for children to adapt to school life and routine. Don't expect too much too soon. Talk to them about what happened and allow them to respond in their own way. If you ask "What did you learn today?" you will most likely be told, "Nothing!". Most of the work at infant level is activity based and children do not understand 'learning' in the same way that adults do. If, however, you ask "What did you do?", "Did you sing?", "Did you draw?", you will have more success.
- If you feel that your child is worried about something that is school-related, talk to the teacher.
- Your child will be tired coming home from school and, occasionally, may sleep for an hour or so when they arrive home. It is important to set a routine of quiet time and early to bed.

Getting support from other parents may be helpful in the early days.

Attendance

If your child cannot attend school for any reason at all, we ask that you provide a signed note explaining why your child missed school. The school is obliged to notify the statutory Educational Welfare Services if your child misses more than 20 days of school. Please see our school's Attendance Strategy contained in this pack for further details.

Communication

It is very important to us as a school that we establish good home-school communication. Your cooperation and support are essential to us. There are several ways in which we communicate with parents depending on the message. A school newsletter is circulated bi-monthly updating parents on general information and events the school is involved in. Text messaging is also used for shorter messages. Emails may also be sent from time to time. Individual letters may be sent from your child's class teacher specific to the class or a note may be written in your child's school journal. It is important that you check your child's schoolbag/journal regularly for notes.

Parent/teacher meetings are held annually in November of each year. It is important that you attend these to keep in touch with your child's progress. It also shows your child that you are interested in his/her progress. If your child is experiencing a particular problem, it is essential that you communicate this to the teacher. Family stress caused by illness, a new baby, a bereavement or a separation can manifest itself in lots of different ways in school. Letting your child's teachers know will allow them to help your child to cope and make allowance for that distress.

I hope you find this pack and the above information useful. Our aim is to ensure the transition to primary school is as smooth as possible for both you and your child. Once again, I would like to thank you for trusting your child in our care and we look forward to working closely with you and your child over the next number of years as they embark on their journey with us.

Yours sincerely,

David Gallagher