

## Easy Does It!

From experience we appreciate that parents & guardians are seeking ways to help support their child as they begin Junior Infants. So, we have put together this little booklet as a practical & general guide for parents. It deals briefly with the period before your child comes to school and their introductory stage in Junior Infants. We have included some ideas for the home, which should stimulate the child's interest and nurture his/her desire to know more.

We trust you will find it helpful and that your child will be happy and fulfilled with us.

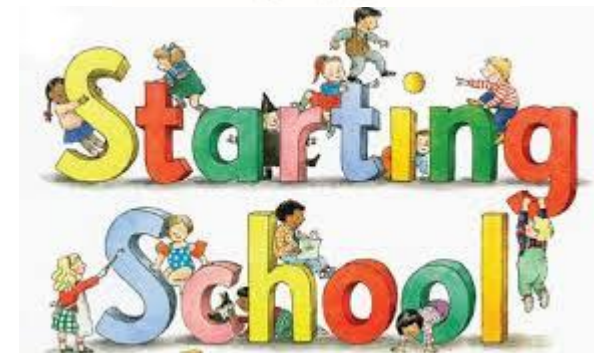
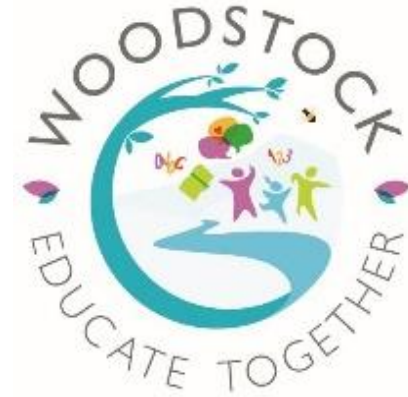
**Mol an óige, agus tiocfaidh sí**

### Useful Information:

[www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) - information on curriculum

[www.educatetogether.ie](http://www.educatetogether.ie) – patron body

[www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie) – national parent's council



Preparing for Junior Infants in

**Woodstock ETNS**

Educate Together Learn Together to Live Together



## Fáilte romhat agus roimh do pháiste.



Starting school will be the first big change in the life of your child. Up to this he/she has felt safe and secure with you in the home and family but now he/she is 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 stress and are ready to make this exciting, new transition.

It is important for parents and teachers to take special care to ensure that the transition from home to school is as smooth as possible. If the child's first experience is one of happy involvement, a very good foundation will have been laid for fruitful school years ahead.

## Positive Behaviour: Kindness Works!

Our **Positive Behaviour** policy is delivered through the Golden Kindness Rules with the emphasis on **do** rather than **don't**

- ✓ **Do Be Gentle (Kind hands, Kind feet: Do not hurt people physically)**
- ✓ **Do Be Kind and Helpful (Kind heart, kind words, kind mind: Do not hurt people's feelings)**
- ✓ **Do Listen with Attention (Kind Respect)**
- ✓ **Do Work to your Best Ability (Be brave & try new things)**
- ✓ **Do Be Honest (We practice Restorative Practice- Remember we can all learn from mistakes😊 )**
- ✓ **Do Be kind to the Earth-How? Look after property (do not waste or damage things)**

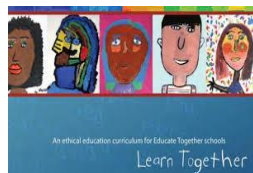
## Areas of the Curriculum: 11 subjects- 6 areas

In Junior Infants children's general development is enhanced through **Aistear, Art & Craft, P.E., Music, Drama, Nature and Ethical education.**

- Language: [Gaeilge \(pdf\)](#), [English \(pdf\)](#)
- Mathematics: [Mathematics \(pdf\)](#)
- Social, Environmental and Scientific Education: [History \(pdf\)](#), [Geography \(pdf\)](#), [Science \(pdf\)](#)
- Arts Education: [Music \(pdf\)](#), [Visual Arts \(pdf\)](#), [Drama \(pdf\)](#)
- Physical Education: [Physical Education \(pdf\)](#)
- Social Personal and Health Education: [Social, Personal and Health Education \(pdf\)](#)

Our Ethical education is delivered through the **Learn Together Programme**. This programme is taught in all Educate Together Schools. The programme is divided into four strands;

- ✓ Moral and Spiritual Development
- ✓ Justice and Equality
- ✓ Ethics and the Environment
- ✓ Belief Systems



## Getting Ready for Learning

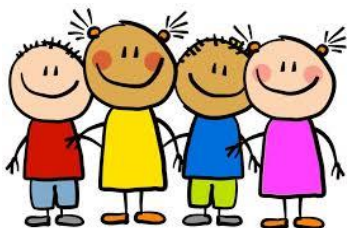
Children are natural learners. They have an inbuilt curiosity and an eagerness to know more about everything, about themselves, about others and about the world around them.

**And they learn fast – but only when they are ready, and their interest is aroused!**

So be mindful - because they come to us so young, we must guard against putting pressure on them to learn what they are not yet ready for. 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.



## Getting Ready for Writing

Making letters on paper is not easy for the small child. He/she 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...

He/she must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important. Encourage him/her to manipulate toys like:

- ✓ **Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc.**
- ✓ **Play dough to make his/her own shapes**
- ✓ **Using a colouring book and thick crayons**
- ✓ **Sheets of paper that she can cut up with a safe scissors**



When he/she begins to use a pencil make sure that he/she holds it correctly at the start. It will be difficult to change this later.

He/she may be making block letters at home even before he/she comes to school. This is fine. *But when he/she starts making lower case letters at school you should try to encourage him/her to discontinue the blocks and practice his/her new system instead.*

Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is his/her definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change him/her.

## 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 - 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.

## Before Your Child Starts...

You should ensure that he/she is as independent as possible-physically, emotionally and socially. If he/she can look after him/herself in these areas he/she will feel secure and confident and settle in readily.

It would help greatly if he/she is able to

- ✓ button and unbutton his/her coat and hang it up
- ✓ use the toilet without help and manage pants buttons/zippers
- ✓ Open and close lunch bag/school bag

Also encourage personal hygiene and cleanliness. Your child should know to:

- ✓ flush the toilet and wash his/her hands, without having to be told
- ✓ use a hanky when necessary.
- ✓ Share toys and playthings with others and take turns
- ✓ tidy up and put away his/her playthings



## Preparing for the 'Big Day'

The child's first day at school is a day to remember for the rest of his/her life. You can help to make it a really happy one! Tell your child about school beforehand, casually, and talk about it as a happy place where there will be a big welcome for him/her and he/she will meet new friends. Please do not use school or the teacher as a threat. *"If you behave like that for teacher she'll be cross with you!"* though said light-heartedly can make some children very apprehensive.

Your child's books will be taken from him/her on the first day



of school and the teacher will store them in the classroom until they are needed.

**Please tell your child this**, some children become concerned that they might not see the books again!

## The Big Day Coming in...

When you arrive at the classroom, be as casual as you can. Your child will meet the teacher and the other children and will be shown where to sit. Hopefully he/she will be absorbed in his new surroundings. So, having assured him you will be back to collect him, wish him goodbye and *make your getaway without delay* 😊

**Maths** is fun! Acting as a Code Breaker Detective children come to realize it is simply a part of language used to understand & describe certain things in daily experiences e.g.



✓ He/she associates certain numbers with particular things – two hands, four wheels, five fingers etc.

- ✓ Counting – one, two, three, four, -Nursery Rhymes Colours/Patterns– 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 of these concepts comes very quickly for some children. For others it takes a long time. Be patient!



natural method of learning since they were a baby. This at times can be messy but if it allows him/her to do the learning him/herself the result is well worth it! Something to be enjoyed. It should never start as a chore for the small child.

### You can help...READING

- ✓ Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- ✓ Read him/her a variety of stories from time to time. He/she will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- ✓ You must convey to her gradually that books are precious things. They must be minded and handled carefully and put away safely.
- ✓ Look at the pictures with him/her and talk to him/her about what they say.
- ✓ Read him/her nursery rhymes. He/she will learn them naturally.
- ✓ Above all, don't push him/her with her early reading. You may turn him/her 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 he/she has at least heard of the letters. If he/she knows what each one looks like, all the better.

### 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? Is the glass full/empty? We turn left at the lights. Etc. We all get to understand concepts especially Maths best by handling and investigating and using real objects. This has been his/her



## Healthy Lunches: \*Nut/Sesame FREE School



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. We ask you to encourage a healthy lunch right from the start.

## A Typical Day in Junior Infants

- 8:45 School begins with reception time for socialization
- 9:00 Teaching and Learning
- 10.30 Break Time and outdoor play
- 10.45 Teaching and learning
- 12.30 Eating time and outdoor play
- 12.55 Teaching and learning
- 1.25 School ends for Infants
- 2:25 School finishes for First Class up.



## The First Week- Shorter school day.

To ease the child into the school routine we have a policy where Junior Infants go home early for the first week- 11:45am. More details will be provided to you in due course.

## Going Home

Be sure to collect your child on time. Children can become

very upset if they feel they are not going home the same time as their friends. If at any time the collecting routine must be changed, please ensure you tell the child and the teacher.



## LANGUAGE- You Can Help...

Talk to your child naturally and casually about things of interest that you or he may be doing- at home, in the shop, in the car, etc. Remember that all the time he/she is absorbing the language heard about them. It takes him a while to make it his/her own and to use it for his/her own needs. Try to make time to listen when he/she wants to tell you something that is important to him. But don't always make him/her the centre of attention.

Answer his/her genuine questions with patience and in an adequate way. Always nurture his/her sense of curiosity and wonder. Introduce him/her gently to the ideas of why? How? When? Where? If? etc. These demand more advanced language structures.

He/she will have his/her own favourite stories that he/she never tires of hearing. Repeat them over and over again and gradually get him/her to tell them to you.

## First Steps in Reading

Ability to read is the foundation for future progress - 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. We get them ready for it over an extended period. Reading is

## Developing command of the spoken language

It is important that the child's ability to talk is as supported as possible. It is through speech that he/she communicates his/her thoughts and feelings, his/her needs and desires, curiosity and wonder. If he/she cannot express these in words he/she will tend to remain silent and will often withdraw from the learning activity of the class. \*That is why a lot of attention is given to language development in the first years of school.



## Handling the Upset Child



Despite 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.

## Teaching Team – Care, trust & resilience

Trust the teaching TEAM. We are experienced and resourceful and used to coping with all kinds of starting – off difficulties. Sometimes the parents are more upset than the new child and they can unwittingly be the cause of the child's anxiety. So, when you have reassured your child leave as fast as possible. The teaching team will engage, distract and reassure him/her more easily when you are not around. Please do not worry- If your child is very distressed, we will naturally call you to let you know when he/she settles.

You must be consistent from the start. Even if a child is upset you must try the upmost to ensure he/she stays for a short time-even ten minutes at school. Dealing positively with change is imperative to developing future coping & life skills.



## Some Important Areas of Early Learning Aistear

The children in Junior Infants love to play!

The Aistear Curriculum Framework is in place in all Irish schools. It is a framework that enhances children's learning in literacy and numeracy as well as emotionally and socially, through the medium of planned and structured, yet creative, play. It provides the children with opportunities to engage in a variety of types of play like

- ✓ Creative play
- ✓ Language play,
- ✓ Exploratory play
- ✓ Constructive play
- ✓ Pretend play
- ✓ Small world play.



The children experience Aistear through different themes, such as the restaurant, the doctor's surgery, the post office, the airport...and others. To begin, the children discuss their plan in their small groups for a few minutes. Next the children play in their groups with support from the class teacher and the SNA. Finally, the children review what they have created or

played with. Naturally this is an engaging & fun way to learn whilst also embracing imagination & cultivating creativity.

Our Aistear area is constantly changing. So, if you are doing a clear out, please keep us in mind!

Finally, our aim at Woodstock ETNS is to inspire a love of learning, equipping each child with the confidence & skills to flourish personally, socially, culturally and of course academically. We look forward to welcoming you and your child to our school. Check out our wonderful learning at:

[www.woodstocketns.ie](http://www.woodstocketns.ie) / or use our Facebook link at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/WoodstockETNS>

*"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."*



*Kind Regards*

*Dr Nicola Martin*