

St. Helen's J.N.S.

Limetree Avenue, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin.



Information Booklet for Parents/Guardians of New Junior Infants.



Table of Contents

Opening Page	1
Table of Contents	2
 Welcome	
Welcome to St. Helen's J.N.S.	4
Contact Information	4
A Message from Our Principal	5
 Preparations	
Getting Ready for Learning	6
Preparing for the First Day	7
School Uniform	7
The First Day of School	8
Tips to Help Your Child with Their First Days in School	9
- Goals for Your Child	
- Goals for You	
 Our School	
Packed Lunches	10
Daily Routine	11
Playground Rules	12
Parents/Guardians and Teacher	12
 St. Helen's J.N.S Curriculum	
- Oral Language Development	13
- First Steps in Reading	13
- Getting Ready for Writing	14

- Understanding Maths	15
- Gaeilge	15
- Social Skills	16
- S.P.H.E	16
- Religious Education	17
- Computers	17
 Jolly Phonics Programme	 18
- Learning the Letter Sounds	18
- Letter Formation	18
- Blending	18
- Identifying Sounds in Words	19
- Tricky Words	19
 Basic Sight Vocabulary for Junior Infants	 20
Early Mathematical Vocabulary	21
Checklist	25
Our Hope	26

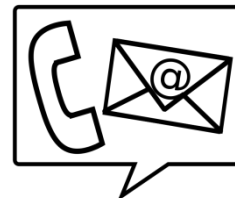
Welcome to St. Helen's J.N.S.



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. The transition from home to school may seem a big step for someone so small but most children manage it without any great fuss or stress - in fact, take to it like ducks to water!

However, we do want to ensure that your child's first experience of school is one of happy involvement. It will lay an excellent foundation for fruitful school years ahead. We know that parents/guardians are very anxious to help in any way possible. We have, therefore, put together this little booklet as a general guide for parents. It deals briefly with the period before your child comes to school and their transition in Junior Infants. It includes some ideas for the home, which should stimulate your child's interest and nurture their desire to know more. We trust you will find it helpful and that your child will be happy and fulfilled with us.

Contact Information



Tel: (01) 846 1763

Fax: (01) 846 2468

Email: secretary@sthelensjunior.com

Web: www.sthelensjunior.com

A Message from Our Principal

Fáilte romhaibh go léir go Naomh Léan! As Principal of St. Helen's Junior School, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our school.

Our School motto 'Mol an óige, agus tiocfaidh sí', is at the heart of our holistic approach to education. We aim to develop the full potential of each child and to celebrate their uniqueness and individuality. Here in St. Helen's we as a whole staff are committed in the role we play in the lives of young children whose education and wellbeing is entrusted to us. We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and so we look forward to the opportunity to build on that foundation as we journey together in educating and supporting your children.

Thank you for joining us on this path.

Le gach dea ghuí,

Lorna Lavin,
Principal.

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. They are like sponges, taking it all in and learning fast but only when they are ready, and their interest is aroused. As they become part of the school community at a young age we aim to cultivate readiness so that they can feel safe and confident in accessing the curriculum. As their educators we are also mindful of not putting pressure on them to learn what they are not yet ready for. Progress rates amongst children can vary greatly especially at a young age. We will always aim to maximise their opportunities to move ahead at their own pace or as near to it as possible.

Our first year in school, therefore, is mainly about feeling happy, settling in, relating to others, making friends, 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 coordination** especially of hand and fingers.
- ☐ Extending their **concentration span** and getting them to listen attentively.
- ☐ Learning through **play (Aistear)**– 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.



Preparing for the First Day!

Your child's first day of school is one to remember for the rest of their lives. With your help we can make this day both exciting and memorable.

- ☐ We advise that you discuss with your child about school beforehand, explaining and reassuring your child that school is a happy place where there will be a big welcome and they will make new friends.
- ☐ Before beginning school this year, your child will see a picture of their new teacher in their new classroom.
- ☐ If you have specific concerns regarding your child please do not hesitate to contact the Principal on principal@sthelensjunior.com. The school will order all books and supply you with information about the booklist used in Junior Infants.

School Uniform

The official school uniform is navy and blue:

- ☐ Navy gymslip or navy skirt
- ☐ Navy pants
- ☐ Blue shirt
- ☐ Navy jumper or cardigan
- ☐ Navy tie



*School tracksuits are available only from Pat O'Farrell School Wear, Portmarnock.

The First Day of School



- ❑ New Junior Infants typically start school at 10:00 a.m. and finish at 12:00 p.m. for the first 2 weeks. This allows the children to settle in. It is very important that you are on time when dropping and collecting your child to prevent stress or anxiety. (We are awaiting more information from the Department of Education and Skills about opening hours for our pupils in September 2020 and this information will follow as soon as we have been informed).
- ❑ After these 2 weeks, the normal infant day will commence. School will start at 8:45 a.m. and finish at 1:30 p.m. (This may alter due to guidelines around the Covid 19 pandemic. More information to follow).
- ❑ It helps to have your child's uniform and school bag ready for the first day. Please remember to label your child's uniform and personal belongings.
- ❑ When you arrive to the school yard you will be guided into your child's classroom to meet their new teacher (and Special Needs Assistant SNA in specific classes). Assure your child that you will be back shortly. We advise that you say goodbye and leave them to it without too much delay.
- ❑ Despite the joint efforts of the teacher and the parents/guardians, a small number of children may still become overwhelmed or upset. If your child happens to be one of them, do not panic. We are very aware that this is a big change for your child, and they can experience a wide range of emotions.

Remember:

- ❑ Trust the teacher. He/she is experienced, resourceful, and well equipped to cope with a range of issues should they arise.
- ❑ Sometimes parents/guardians can become more upset than their child which can be a main source of anxiety for the child.

Tips to Help Your Child with Their First Days in School



Goals for your child:

Try to ensure that your child is as independent as possible before starting school. This will help them to feel secure, confident, and ready for school. It would help greatly if your child could:

- ☐ Fasten and recognise their own shoes. Velcro fasteners are easiest for children.
- ☐ Fasten and recognise their own school bag – is the school bag big enough for larger books/folders?
- ☐ Button and unbutton their coat and hang it up.
- ☐ Use the toilet unaided.
- ☐ Demonstrate personal hygiene and cleanliness – knowing how to flush the toilet and wash their hands, without having to be told. Sanitiser will be provided by school and you may also wish to include a personal sanitiser for your own child.
- ☐ Share toys and playthings with others and “take turns”.
- ☐ Tidy up and put away their playthings and school materials.

Goals for you:

- ☐ Make sure that you are familiar with the policies of the school with regards to Child Protection, Healthy Eating Guidelines, Health and Safety etc. We will provide more information about day to day policies such as accidents in the school, supervision, homework etc. These can be viewed on the school website www.sthelensjunior.com.
- ☐ We ask that the enrolment forms are completed carefully, giving the teacher as much information as he/she needs to care for your child effectively. Should you move to a new house, change your phone number or your doctor you will need to have the enrolment form altered accordingly.



Packed Lunches

Lunch is an important meal for school-going children. You can help prepare your child for lunchtime by:

- ☐ Involving your child in the preparation and packing of their lunch.
- ☐ Don't pack too much food. Smaller portions are easier to eat.
- ☐ Picking the healthiest option for your children. A healthy lunch helps the children to concentrate and learn throughout the day.

Below are some Examples which we would recommend in line with our Healthy Eating Policy:

- ☐ **Sandwiches** - bread, pitta bread, wraps, bagels, crackers, rolls etc.
- ☐ **Rice or pasta.**
- ☐ **Fillings** – Chicken, ham, turkey, tuna, cheese, jam, sweet corn, cucumber, grated carrot, chopped peppers, tomatoes, lettuce etc.
- ☐ **Fruit and Veg** – raisins, fruit salad, a cut apple, a peeled orange, grapes, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes etc.
- ☐ **Snacks** – Cheese triangles/strings, crackers, rice cakes etc.
- ☐ **Drinks** – Water.



Remember:

- ✓ If they don't eat it at home, they won't eat it in school!
- ✓ Smaller food portions are easier to eat.
- ✓ If including whole fruit in the lunchbox, select fruit that is a suitable size for a child to easily hold in their hand and eat.
- ✓ **We are a nut free school!**



*Visit our school website - www.sthelensjunior.com for more information on our Healthy Eating Guidelines and for additional healthy food websites.

Daily Routine

<u>School begins:</u>	8:45 a.m.
<u>Fruit break:</u>	10:40 – 10:45 a.m.
<u>Yard:</u>	10:45 – 11:00 a.m.
<u>Lunch:</u>	12:30 – 12:40 p.m.
<u>Yard:</u>	12:40 – 1:00 p.m.
<u>School ends:</u>	1:30 p.m.



(We are awaiting guidelines from the DES- the above times may alter as a result).

- ☐ 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 your child has settled in and hopefully, looks upon school as a "home from home" do continue to show interest in their daily adventures.
- ☐ If your child's progress is slow do not compare them to other children, everyone works at their own pace. Loss of self- esteem can be very damaging to a child.
- ☐ At times there may be other adults in the classroom, we have several Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) working in our school. We are also a base school for trainee teachers.
- ☐ Remember to consistently praise your child for their achievements, big or small.
- ☐ Children often 'forget' or relay messages incorrectly, so please, check your child's bag each night for notes as well as *Aladdin Connect*.

***We are awaiting further information from the Department of Education and Skills regarding school routines and timetables. More information to follow.**

Playground Rules

Rough behaviour is totally discouraged in the playground. The school has a Code of Positive Behaviour, which promotes fairness and respect to all pupils, school management, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents/guardians. All children in the school are encouraged to use kind hands, kind feet and kind words, as well as:

- ☐ Being kind to one another.
- ☐ Playing nicely together.
- ☐ Being polite to everyone.
- ☐ Being careful with the equipment.
- ☐ Standing still in silence when the bell rings.



Parents/Guardians and Teacher

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 please contact the school secretary to arrange a meeting outside of your child's school day.



The Curriculum

Throughout their time in St. Helen's J.N.S., your child's general development will be enhanced through English, Gaeilge and Maths, as well as History, Geography, Science, Music, Visual Art, Drama, P.E., SPHE and Religious Education.

Oral Language Development:

It is important that a child's ability to talk is as advanced as possible. It is through speech that children communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs and desires, curiosity, and wonder.



How Can I Help?

- ☐ 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 your child is constantly absorbing the language they are exposed to. It may take them a while, but gradually children learn to use the words for their own needs.
- ☐ Introduce them gently to the 5 W's – *Who? What? Where? When? Why?* – and *How?* These demand more advanced language structures.
- ☐ Your child will have their own favourite stories that they never tire of hearing. Repeat these stories and gradually get them to tell you the story.

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. Your child will also be exposed to a print-rich classroom environment.

We very deliberately do not rush or push children into reading. We get them ready for it over an extended period. Reading is meant to be enjoyable. It should never start as a chore for the small child.



How can I help?

- ☐ Expose your child to print – signs in a shop, words in a book, posters, a calendar etc.
- ☐ Read stories to your child that are of interest to them, attractive and colourful.
- ☐ Say and chant rhymes and nursery rhymes – children love these!
- ☐ Play word games e.g. I Spy, rhyming games, Snap, word recognition games etc.



Getting Ready for Writing

Making letters on paper is not easy for small children. They must learn to hold a pencil properly and make regular shapes. Their hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage. They must develop the ability to get hand and eye work together (hand-eye coordination). This is very important.

When your child begins to use a pencil make sure that he/she holds it correctly from the beginning. It is difficult to change bad habits. Special pencils are available for early users. Pencils are provided in school for school use.

Children may be making block capital letters at home even before coming to school. This is fine. However, when they start making lower case letters at school, please try to encourage them to discontinue the use of capital letters and practise the new system.

Children who begin to show left hand dominance should be allowed to hold the crayon/pencil in their left hand.

How can I help?

- ☐ Carry out activities that help with hand/eye coordination – jigsaws, Lego, threading beads, playdough, colouring with thick crayons, cutting with child-friendly scissors etc.
- ☐ Provide your child with plenty of opportunities to develop their pre-writing skills – mark making, colouring, drawing etc.

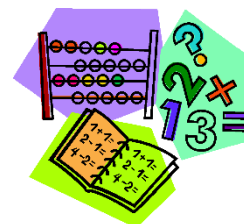
Understanding Maths

Maths for children in Junior Infants 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 experiences e.g. colours, patterns, matching etc.

Some children grasp these concepts very quickly. For others it may take longer. Be patient. Mathematical understanding cannot be forced on a child.

How can I help?

- ☐ Counting - *"How many spoons are there?" etc.*
- ☐ Colours – *"Can you hand me the red ball?" etc.*
- ☐ Prepositions – *"Where is your doll?" "Is your doll under the couch?" "What happened after that?" etc.*
- ☐ Matching/Sorting – *"Can you show me a bear that is the same size as this bear?" "Can you put all of the green toys together?" etc.*
- ☐ Odd One Out – *"Is the strawberry the same colour as the banana?" "Which one is not the same size?" etc.*



Gaeilge

All children enjoy learning another language besides their own spoken one. They have no difficulty in picking it up because it fascinates them as another code of communication. In St. Helen's J.N.S we make a big effort to use Gaeilge as naturally and frequently throughout their day. An information sheet with some of the commonly used *frásaí* will be sent home in the first term to enable you also to incorporate this vocabulary *sa bhaile*.



How can I help?

- ☐ Encouraging your child to use new words that they have learned in school, at home.
- ☐ Adopting a positive attitude towards Irish.
- ☐ Introduce and discuss Irish culture and customs with your child e.g. Gaelic football, hurling/camogie, Irish dancing, Irish music etc.

Social skills

Social skills are very important. Building on core values introduced at home we also encourage good manners in school such as “please/thank you”, addressing others properly, being courteous to fellow students and teachers.

We encourage all children to mix and play with many others rather than being dependent on one friend only. Teachers often move the children around to encourage the development of a wide circle of friends.



SPHE – Social, Personal and Health Education

In light of the recent pandemic experienced by young children, the staff of St. Helen’s J.N.S. will prioritise the emotional wellbeing of all our young pupils as they begin school.

Our aims are:

- ☐ To promote the personal development and wellbeing of the child.
- ☐ To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others, as well as an appreciation of the dignity of every human being.
- ☐ To promote the health of every child and to provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
- ☐ To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future.
- ☐ To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life.
- ☐ To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.



Religious Education

At St. Helen's J.N.S., the children partake in the Grow in Love religious programme.

Preparation for Holy Communion takes place in Second Class.

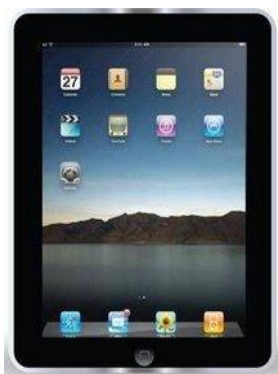


Computers

While IT is not a curriculum subject, computers and iPads can be helpful resources for pupils and teachers alike. As there is access to the internet on these devices, children are only allowed to use them while being supervised. Interactive whiteboards are also used in the classroom to enhance the children's learning.

Acceptable Use Policy

The aim of the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that pupils will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's Internet resources in a safe and effective manner. An AUP form will be provided to you by the school and is also available on our school website. Before you sign the form, the policy should be read carefully to ensure that the conditions of use are acceptable to you and your child/children.



Jolly Phonics Programme



Learning the Letter Sounds

In Jolly Phonics the 42 main sounds of English are taught, not just the alphabet sounds. For each sound there is an action which helps the children remember the sound the letter makes. As the letters are taught, they are stuck into a Sound Book, which is brought home. If possible, go through the Sound Book with your child every day. The letters are not introduced in alphabetical order.

Group 1:

s, a, t, i, p, n.

These letters have been chosen because they make simpler three letter words than any other six letters. Sounds with more than one way of being written are first taught in one form only. For instance, the sound “ai” (rain) is on the Sound Sheet. The alternative “a-e” (cake) and “ay” (day) will be taught later.

Letter Formation

It is very important that your child holds the pencil correctly. If the hold starts incorrectly it is very difficult to correct this. The correct formation for each letter can be seen on the bottom of each Sound Sheet. Many of the letters have a joining tail at the end to make it easier to transfer into joined up writing.

Blending

Blending is a process of saying the sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word, e.g. c-a-t is cat. It is a technique your child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. Some children take longer to do this than others. To start with you should sound out the word and see if your child can hear it. The sounds must be said quickly to hear the word. It is easier if the first sound is said slightly louder e.g. **b**-u-s.

To give your child practice at blending, she/he will bring home Word Boxes. Please listen to your child blending the sounds to read the words, and then send it back to school. Once your child has been through the Word Boxes they will bring home a reading book. Please listen to him/her regularly. It is important that your child understands what she/he has read. You can help by talking about the story with your child.

Identifying Sounds in Words

To write independently your child will need to be able to hear the sounds in words and to write the letters for those sounds.

When your child can hear the sounds in words, he/she may bring home words with which to practice their new writing skill. These words are for you to call out. He/she must listen for the sounds and write down the letters for those sounds. This is the first step towards your child becoming an independent writer.

Tricky Words

Some words cannot be sounded out or spelt correctly by listening for the sounds in them. These are called the “Tricky Words” and must be learnt. As your child becomes more fluent at reading and writing, she/he will be taught how to cope with the Tricky Words.

This all sounds a great deal of work, but it goes in stages and is spread over a considerable period of time. Little and often is best. Your child may be tired after school but don't worry. It is better to leave it than push too hard. There is no doubt that the effort on your part, at this stage, is well worth it.

“The more you **read**
the more **things** you know.
The more that you **learn**
the more **places** you'll go.”
-Dr. Seuss

Basic Sight Vocabulary for Junior Infants

the	of	and
to	a	in
that	is	was
he	for	it
with	as	his
on	be	at
by	I	this
had	not	are
but	from	or
have	an	they
which	one	you
were	her	all
she	there	would
their	we	him
been	has	

Early Mathematical Vocabulary

Aa	because	centre	dot
above	before	change	down
about	behind	choose	downward
across	bend	circle	
add	between	close	Ee
after	big	coin	each
afternoon	bigger	cold	early
age	biggest	colour	edge
all	begin	compare	eight
along	beginning	cone	empty
altogether	belongs	corner	end
always	beneath	correct	enough
and	block	cost	equal
answer	border	count	euro
around	both	crooked	evening
arrange	bottom	cube	every
away	broad		
	by	Dd	Ff
Bb		day	far
back	Cc	different	fat
backwards	cash	divide	fast
balance	cent	distance	faster

fastest	guess	inside	lighter
few		into	lightest
fill	Hh		line
figure	hard	Jj	little
finish	harder	join	loop
first	hardest		long
fit	half	Kk	longer
five	heavier	keep	longest
flat	heaviest	know	lot
float	heavy		low
flow	height	Ll	lower
follow	high	large	lowest
forwards	higher	last	
four	highest	late	Mm
Friday	hot	later	match
front	hotter	latest	many
full	hottest	least	mark
	hour	left	middle
Gg	hollow	length	miss
go		less	missing
goes with	Ii	lesser	Monday
gone	if	level	money
group	in	light	morning

more	number	price	seven
most		pull	shape
move	Oo	push	share
	off	put	short
Nn	old		shorter
narrow	older	Qq	shortest
narrower	oldest	question	small
narrowest	on	quick	smaller
near	one	quicker	smallest
nearer	open	quickest	smooth
nearest	or		soft
nearly	order	Rr	softer
never	over	right	softest
new	out	roll	solid
newer	outer	rough	some
newest	outside	round	soon
next		row	sort
night	Pp		space
nine	pair	Ss	spiral
none	part	same	split
not	past	Saturday	straight
nought	piece	set	Sunday
now	point	second	swap

switch	triangle	which	
	Tuesday	who	
Tt	turn	whole	
take	twist	wide	
tall	two	wider	
tall		widest	
tallest	Uu	width	
thick	under		
thicker	until	Xx	
thickest	up		
thickness	upward	Yy	
thin		young	
thinner	Vv	younger	
thinnest		youngest	
third	Ww	yesterday	
three	warm		
Thursday	warmer	Zz	
time	warmest	zigzag	
tiny	way	zero	
tip	Wednesday		
today	week		
tomorrow	weight		
tonight	when		
top	where		

Checklist



Medical forms returned to school	
Emergency contact information given to the school via <i>Aladdin</i>	
List of agreed adults allowed to collect my child from school, via <i>Aladdin</i>	
Uniform – including tracksuit	
School bag and pencil case (pencils, rubbers, and sharpeners)	
Books (purchased by school)	
Lunch box	
Water bottle	
Weather dependent coat	
Label all clothing and personal items	

Our Hope

We hope that this booklet may offer parents/guardians 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. We look forward to you and your child becoming a part of our school community.

“Mol an óige, agus tiocfaidh sí”



