



12th August, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians of Junior Infant pupils,

We are very much looking forward to welcoming your daughter to St. Mary's National School. There is no doubt that school will be a bit different this year. But, based on experience, we have every faith that the children will adjust quickly and will adapt to the new routines. I have, today, issued a letter to all parents outlining our plan for re-opening the school. All parents are requested to familiarise themselves with the content of this plan please.

Based on Guidance issued by the Department of education on 27th July, our plan for Junior Infants for the first 5 school days has had to change. I have attached the revised plan here. Please note the new start and finishing times for Junior Infants.

- Junior Infant children will start their school day at the later time of **9.30am** and finish their school day at the earlier time of **12.00pm for the first 5 school days.**
- From their 6th school day, Junior Infant children will start their day at **9.05am** and finish their school day at **1.45pm.**

Unfortunately, parents will not be permitted to enter the school with their child on the first day of school (or on subsequent days). Parents are invited to walk their daughter to the entrance door of the school where children will be greeted by a member of staff. Parents are requested to leave the school grounds promptly. Entrance and exit points for Junior infants are as follows:

Teacher	Entry Point	Collection Point
Junior Infants: Ms. Lynch- Rm 3	Fire Exit Door- Rm 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class will be brought to the top of the ramp in front of the fire exit door attached to Room 3.• Parents wait in the yard area marked 'G'.• Children will be dismissed one by one.
Junior Infants: Ms. McCarthy- Rm 2	Main Front Door- New Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class will be brought to the top of the lower steps in front of the New Building.• Parents wait in the yard area marked 'E'.• Children will be dismissed one by one.

Starting 'big school' is an exciting time for both children and parents. It is also a time of transition and change. Please be assured that we will do our utmost to ensure every pupil feels safe and happy at school. Children's wellbeing will be our priority.

Parents/Guardians also play a key role in assisting children to settle into school life. **What can parents/guardians do to help?**

- Read the attached **guidance document developed by NEPS on how the transition from pre-school to primary school.**
- Access the wide range of resources and support materials that been prepared and published by both the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration. They include:



- Let's Get Ready, a resource to provide guidance for parents, teachers and Early Learning and Care (ELC) practitioners in supporting children's transition from ELC settings to primary school, available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a8d8f-ready-for-school/>
- The Let's Play Ireland website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/lets-playireland/>
- Try to maintain healthy routines and schedules to help your child feel more secure and reassured.
- Talk often to your child about the changes ahead. Children may not talk about how they feel, but that does not mean they are not thinking about it. Ask what your child is looking forward to, what information they don't have and what concerns they have. Listen carefully.
- Where possible, give your child simple information, at their level of understanding, about their concerns and questions. Talking, drawing and/or using play activities about moving to primary school can provide a sense of safety and comfort.
- To keep everyone safe, we will be following guidance that will be provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Monitor Aladdin Connect for updates. If your child has particular health concerns or conditions, you should discuss these with the school.
- Children will have to wash their hands more than in preschool. Remind your child of things they will need to know how to do, such as washing their hands and coughing/sneezing into their elbow. Singing while washing hands can make it fun.
- Be positive and calm when talking about school.
- Get your child involved in planning for the move to primary school. You can do this by letting them choose their schoolbag, lunchbox, pencil case etc. Let them try on their new uniform. Ask your child what information she would like you to share with their new teacher.
- Continue to encourage their independence, for example, packing their own school bag, putting on and taking off their coat/jumper/shoes, opening and closing their lunchbox and drink bottle, using the toilet, washing their hands, wiping their nose with a tissue. Further information about developing your child's independence skills is available on the DCYA Ready for School webpage.
- Show excitement and happiness about your child going to primary school. Ask your child to tell you about all the nice, positive things they are looking forward to (for example: new friends, new classroom, new lessons, new toys).
- Going back to usual activities that involve separation from parents/guardians will also support them.
- Finally, remember that it is important for parents/ guardians to say hopeful and positive things about the change and to expect all to work out well.

We look forward to welcoming your daughter to our school. If you have any questions about your daughter starting school in St. Mary's NS you can email them to office@stmarysnscobh.com.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Fiona O'Callaghan, Principal

Attachments: 1) Revised plan for Junior Infants- first 5 days of school, 2) NEPS document: Guidance for Parents of children transitioning from Pre-school to Primary School.