



# a guide to starting our SCHOOL

# WELCOME TO ST. BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL



You are very welcome to St. Brigid's Primary School.

Starting school is one of the most important days in any child's life and a very important event for your family.

We hope that the children have seven happy and successful years in school. To help with the transition to primary school we have produced this booklet to give parents relevant information about our school. Partnership with parents is a very important aim for St. Brigid's PS and we look forward to working with you in the coming years.



# contents

**SCHOOL life**

**3**

**CURRICULUM**

**5**

**assessment**

**7**

**Help from home**

**9**

## **teaching staff**

### *Principal*

Mr Kieran O'Neill

### *Vice-Principal*

Mrs L Campbell

Mrs M McKay

Mrs C McShannock

Mrs R Hickey

Mrs A McIlroy

Mrs D Kelly

Mrs L Diamond

Mrs S McMullan

Ms A McCormick

Mrs M O'Mullan

## **occasional visitors**

Priest, Dentist, Doctor & Nurse

## **other staff**

### *Secretary*

Mrs S McAlister

### *Caretaker*

Mr D Rodgers

### *Classroom Assistants*

Mrs A McBride

Mrs C Coyle

Mrs O Murdoch

Miss C Cahoon

Miss V Gilmore

Mrs J Thompson

Mrs B Halliday

Mrs P Connolly

### *Supervisors*

Mrs J McCook

Mrs C McAlister



## setting new children

At St. Brigid's we try to smooth the path from nursery/playgroup to school. During the first few weeks children are admitted in small groups to ensure that each child has settled reasonably well before any other children come.

This of course means that some children may not start until later in September so please be patient and understand that we have the interests of your child at heart.

Your child's first day will last until 12 o'clock and I would ask you to stay with him/her a short while, trying to keep out of sight after you leave.

Your child will start school on

Please encourage and support your child at all times. Show an interest in his/her school work and praise him/her when s/he tries. Interest and encouragement help in producing success.

As a parent you can ensure:

- your child gets an adequate amount of sleep,
- is not too rushed in the morning and is provided with an adequate breakfast,
- when homework does commence ensure that it is well done,
- all belongings are labelled and packed carefully.

## the school day

School Start	9.00am
Morning break	10.45 - 10.55am
Lunchtime	12.15 - 1.00pm
Finishing Time	2.00pm

From the first week in October the Year 1 children will be in school until 2pm. From this time onwards we would ask that you leave your child in the Year 1 line in the playground, from where they will be collected and brought in by the class teacher. In this way you will help develop your child's confidence and independence.

## uniform

Uniform consists of:

- Yellow polo shirt
- Green sweatshirt (with school crest)
- Grey skirt/pinafore
- Green/white summer dress
- Grey trousers
- Black shoes
- Green school coat (optional)
- Black slippers for P.E

**Please ensure that all items of clothing, especially sweatshirts, coats and indoor footwear, have the child's name clearly marked.**

## meals and lunches

### • Break

St. Brigid's is a Healthy Breaks School, this means that milk or water, fruit or bread should be consumed at this time. Milk is available for morning break (paid monthly).

### • Dinners / Lunches

A school dinner is available for those who wish this service. Dinner money can be paid each Monday for the whole week or daily when required. A copy of the canteen menu will be sent to you each term and posted on the website.

*Could you please put all money (milk, dinner, trip) in a clearly marked envelope. Application forms for free school meals are available from the school secretary.*

## the sunshine club

### Morning Club

The school's Morning Club provides supervised care for children before school. It is managed by Mrs Jayne Thompson (Learning Support Assistant). The club is open from 8am and parents can bring their child(ren) to school from this time onwards. This gives parents peace of mind, safe in the knowledge that their child will be provided with a breakfast and will be cared for until the school day begins at 9am. The cost for this service is £1 per day.

### Afternoon Club

The Afternoon Club, provides after school supervised care for pupils from Years 1-3. Children are able to enjoy a snack and play in small groups, supervised by the Learning Support Staff. We find that this service is particularly beneficial for parents who are collecting older siblings at 3pm. The cost for this service is £2 per day.

### After School Care

The After School Club will operate from 2pm - 5pm each school day. The Club will include homework support, sport, creative and expressive studies, ICT, indoor and outdoor activities. Pupils will be provided with a snack (food and drink) during each session. Parents will be required to book a place for their child monthly in advance. The cost for the club is £2 per hour.

## absences

All pupil absences have to be reported to the school either by speaking to the class teacher/note to class teacher or by phoning the school office.



## problem solving

Raising the profile and importance of problem solving has been a school priority. The children have been developing a range of strategies for solving problems from Y1 to Y7.

Regular opportunities to problem solve will help to promote the development of children's thinking skills in all areas of the curriculum.

The promotion of thinking, problem solving and investigation skills is being developed through science, which is one of our school's curriculum priorities along with Technology.

## outdoor play

St. Brigid's staff believe that the outdoors can provide young children with one of the best possible environments in which to learn. Consequently, children in the Foundation Stage have access to a stimulating, richly resourced separate playground in which to play daily.

The outdoor classroom offers children the opportunity to use effective modes of learning- play, movement and sensory experience. The outdoor design and layout has been given careful consideration so that it reflects the learning environment indoors promoting creative, imaginative teaching and learning within the following zoned areas:

- Imaginative / Role Play Area
- Horticultural Area
- Large-Scale Construction Area
- Sand Area
- Water Area
- Large Movement Area
- Wheeled Vehicle Area
- Table top / Snack Area

*“...the best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky.”*

Margaret McMillan, 1925

## Sunshine room

Children in the Foundation Stage classes use both the play equipment in the sunshine room and the space to add to play experiences in the morning. When appropriate children use the sand, water and table top activities in the room and these are changed routinely according to the topic being studied. Play remains an essential and rich part of the learning process and we believe that our Sunshine Room provides the stimulating environment conducive to this.

## Circle time

Circle time is a structured lesson held once a week when each class (Y1 - Y7) meets in a circle to speak, listen and interact.

Circle Time raises children's self esteem, improves talking and listening, builds confidence, encourages independent thinking and teaches social skills that promote more positive relationships with friends and others.

## School books

Children in Year One are able to borrow books from the Foundation Stage library two times per week and we would ask that you encourage your child to take good care of these books. We have revamped our Foundation/Key Stage 1 library with beautiful new books, both fiction and non-fiction. Please share the books with your child and sign the library log book. It helps the children to know and the teacher to know, that you think reading is important.

Also, as a result of the ongoing Reading Recovery programme within the school the children now have access to a wealth of

levelled reading books. A recent investment in new reading materials has resulted in new and attractive reading books in all classes throughout the school.

## Interactive whiteboard

Every classroom in the school has an interactive whiteboard. An interactive whiteboard is a surface onto which a computer screen can be displayed. It is touch sensitive and lets the child use a special pen which acts like a mouse, controlling the computer from the board itself. Interactive whiteboards can help teachers deliver exciting and engaging lessons to children of all ages. They can also improve teaching and learning by increasing pupil motivation and involvement.

**'The earlier children are introduced to books and start playing around with words and language, the more they will benefit in their later school life.'**

Peter Bryant Watts (Professor of Psychology, Oxford University)





Children come to school with a wide range of experiences, skills and attitudes. Teachers need to find out what children know, understand and can do in order to be able to plan appropriately for them. This is known as assessment.

## Why are schools carrying out assessment?

Assessment has two main purposes:

- to gather information about each child in order to enable teachers to plan effectively for each child's learning needs;
- to help teachers monitor children's progress as they move through the primary school.

## When will the children be assessed?

Assessments will be informally carried out throughout the school year.

## What will be assessed?

While the teacher will form a picture of the child's all round development, the following areas are a focus:

- personal, social and emotional development
- language development
- early mathematical development
- ICT skills

## How will children be assessed?

Children will normally be observed over a period of time as they play in the Sunshine Room, outdoors and when they take part in other classroom activities. They should be unaware that they are being assessed. This is certainly not something that you or your child should be worried about.

## How will parents be involved in their child's assessment?

An important part of the assessment process is to talk with parents about their child.

The class teacher will arrange to meet with you before the process begins to give you an opportunity to provide information about your child. Furthermore, an additional parent/teacher meeting later in the first term will provide time for discussion about your child's skills and competencies so that together we can give your child the best possible start to school.

Parents will receive a written report at the end of the school year about their child's progress in all curricular areas.





## some things to practise at home!

Can your child...

1. Cope efficiently with going to the toilet?
2. Wash and dry his/her hands?
3. Use his/her own handkerchief?
4. Remove his/her coat and hang it up?
5. Put on and remove his/her shoes?
6. Tidy up his/her toys?
7. Use a knife and fork?
8. Share his/her toys and be prepared to take turns?

If the answer to these is "yes", then coping in a Year One class will present fewer problems.

## coming and going

We require full information on how your child is getting home and who has permission to collect them, to be assured of his/her safety. If the pick-up procedure is changed, please inform the class teacher.

*Please ensure that you supply updated contact details so that school records contain any change of address/telephone number you may have.*

Parents/carers who collect their children in the afternoon should remain in the playground (at the side of the school). Children will be escorted out.

*It is important for your child that you are punctual in the morning and in the afternoon.*

Encourage your child to respect and obey the Patrol Person. His/her safety depends on this in later years.

## manipulative exercises

Your child needs experience in handling lots of different objects in order to get his/her hands, eyes and mind working together.

Let your child practise with pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors (safety scissors are best).

This is early training to help him/her when it comes to writing, cutting and painting. Together with your child you can make books. Let him/her cut from magazines, papers and comics, and, using a safe adhesive, mount these together to form a picture or collage.

As they stick in each picture, you may wish to write a word or short sentence below, which describes the picture. When writing use lower case letters (see below).

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Due to the complexities of the writing process, we would ask you not to teach your child handwriting at home. Children frequently develop bad habits e.g. starting letters in the wrong place, and mixing lower and upper case letters, which are extremely difficult to eradicate when learning to form letters in school.

**“the home provides a mathematical laboratory for investigation and a playground for mathematical exploration.”**

Graham (1989)

## homework

Homework should not take longer than 10 minutes per night and is only given Monday to Thursday inclusive. Homework consists of mostly short, practical activities that are used to extend the learning into the home environment. Guidance accompanies each homework ensuring that parents know exactly how to help and support their child. Initially, reading books are sent home for sharing with parents. As the school year progresses your child will eventually read the books independently.



## early mathematical experiences

The following suggestions are designed to assist you in helping to develop your child's early mathematical skills.

They are not to be seen as a series of lessons but rather everyday opportunities where you could highlight some aspect of mathematics, which will benefit your child.

Remember, the most important thing is to make learning early mathematics fun.

### sorting/classifying

The ability to classify/sort information or objects is a very important life skill. In the home there are many opportunities to develop this skill.

When tidying toys away, consider putting all the toys which are soft and furry in one box, those which have wheels in another box and those we can use to build in another box.



Setting the table involves matching. Has the child enough cutlery? Who will sit beside whom? Can the child carry some dishes to the sink for washing? Are they heavy to carry?

When sorting the washing your child could help e.g. all the white clothes, all the sheets or towels. Allow your child to sort the clothes pegs by colour or size. Can we put all the socks into pairs or have we some odd ones?

Ask your child questions as you both put the toys away, e.g. Is the box full? Is there room for more toys in it? Will the lid fit onto the box if we put more toys in? Doing this activity will assist your child in developing some early ideas of volume and capacity.

Do remember that playing with construction toys e.g. duplo/lego and building bricks will assist children in developing an early understanding of space. Girls should be encouraged to play with construction toys.

### measures/shape and space

Shopping provides another opportunity to develop maths. At the supermarket ask your child to help get different groceries for you. Ask questions such as: Are these fruits or vegetables? Are they soft or hard to touch?

On another visit, you could ask can they reach all the products? Which ones are on the lower shelves? How can they reach the higher shelves?

Perhaps another visit could involve the child looking at different packaging of the products. Which products are in boxes, in bags, in tubes or cans? Which ones are red, green or have lots of colours?

Do not expect your child to be able to count all the different colours - that is for you to do. At present you are only making your child aware of number and counting. There is a lot of work to be completed in school before your child will be able to fully appreciate the value of numbers.

When the shopping is carried home, are the bags heavy or light? Ask what happens to your arm when you carry a heavy bag. This is an early understanding of weight. When putting the shopping away look at the shapes of the containers. Which ones can we put on top of each other? This will assist your child in developing an early understanding of shape and space.

## money

Sort coins according to colour or size. When shopping allow your child to pay for some items e.g. sweets or a comic. This will assist in developing their knowledge of money.

## time

Time is a difficult concept for young children but you can help your child to develop an early understanding of the concept. In the morning, ask what will we do first? When dressing, ask which clothes will we put on first?

Often children go to the park or the swimming pool on a Saturday. These are opportunities for you to help your child develop early appreciation of the order of the days of the week e.g. 'Today is Sunday and we go to Granny's house. Tomorrow is Monday and you go to school!'

Do not expect your child to remember and understand the days of the week.

It is essential that children are able to follow sequential directions. All of early mathematics is dependent on the ability to follow multi-step directions.

Encourage children to retell stories or events independently. Ask children to follow one or two related directions e.g. go to the door; open it, go to the hall cupboard and bring back your coat.

When the child is able to follow a series of related tasks successfully, s/he is then asked to follow a series of unrelated tasks e.g. 'Put the toys away, bring me your blue jumper and then go and draw in your colouring book.'

Many computation and problem solving activities involve a series of steps that follow each other in time and demands an appreciation of what comes first, second and third.

Playing games involves learning rules and the order of play will also help to develop these skills. Games will assist in developing memory skills as well as social skills.



## Volume and capacity

Bathtime is a suitable occasion to develop early mathematical skills in capacity. A collection of plastic bottles and some sponges are all that is required. The large milk jug type bottles which have a handle are especially good. Some children may require assistance in filling a bottle to the top and then stopping. Many children enjoy watching the bottle overflow with water. On some occasions you may say that you want to see if they can fill the bottle to the top and then stop. Perhaps on another occasion, the child may wish just to pour water from one container to another. Either way your child is developing early mathematical skills.

## Developing mathematical language

Counting rhymes will be beneficial in helping children learn to develop early mathematics. Stories such as 'Bears in the Night' and 'Rosie's Walk' will assist children in developing an awareness of positional language. Often there will be opportunities for talking about putting the plate on the table or standing at the door. It is important for young children to develop this language of position.

## ICT

Information and Communications Technology across the curriculum has the potential to transform and enrich pupils' experiences and environments. It can empower pupils, develop self-esteem and promote positive attitudes to learning. Additionally, the creative use of ICT has the potential to improve pupils' thinking skills, providing them with opportunities to become independent, self-motivated and flexible learners. ICT will form a substantial element of your child's curriculum in St. Brigid's.

Our school website: [www.stbrigidspshallymoney.com](http://www.stbrigidspshallymoney.com) will keep you informed about school events. It will also act as a platform for the pupils to exhibit their work and exchange it with you at home. Exhibit and exchange are two important e-skills pupils will need to develop through the ICT curriculum.



## early literacy development

### talking and listening

TALK with your child, LISTEN to him/her; answer all questions and try to ask some too.

TALK in an adult way and don't talk down to him/her. Try to avoid using baby language such as "din dins", "biccies", "seeties" and "ta-ta".

Listening is a two-way process. Children are expected to listen to adults... sometimes we forget that it is equally important that we listen in turn.

LISTEN to what s/he has got to say to you. Encourage him/her to tell you what she did with his/her friends, about the games s/he played, the story s/he heard or perhaps the programme s/he watched on television.

**the child who is talked to and listened to, has their questions answered, has an interest in books, likes listening to stories, knows some nursery rhymes, is the child who starts school with the greatest advantage.**

### suggested talking/ listening games for playing at home

Learning to read can be fun, however it is not always easy and involves many skills, many of which you can help your child with at home or even in the car.

Some of the games that follow can help your child acquire important skills for reading.

By playing these games together, the skills needed for reading, will be strengthened, enabling your child to approach reading with confidence. The games are best played for short periods of time, but as often as possible.

If you find your child isn't interested then it's best to leave it and perhaps try again later.

Don't forget games are **fun!** If they are, your child will ask **you** to play them.



## early literacy development

### listening game

#### WHAT AM I?

Give some details about a person or object e.g. I am small, I have feathers, I can swim and quack! What am I?

#### O'GRADY GAME

You are O'Grady and the game is played: 'O'Grady says clap your hands twice.'

The child then carries out what O'Grady has told them to do.

#### OUT SHOPPING

A shopping list is made by talking aloud: 'I went shopping and I bought 2 apples and three oranges'.

You child repeats: 'I went shopping and I bought 2 apples and three oranges.'

The number of items is increased to the number the child feels happy with.

In learning to read your child needs to be able to distinguish sounds, to be aware of sounds, to remember patterns of sounds and the order of those sounds.

Your child needs to be able to hear the way words are built up, and finally to be able to put those sounds together to make words. Try these games:

#### SOUNDS AROUND US

Ask your child to close their eyes, let them tell you what sounds they can hear all around them. Make the sounds we hear every day like tearing paper, brushing your teeth, pouring water etc. Don't let your child see what you are doing. How long does it take them to guess the sound?

### remembering

Say rhymes and sing songs that are repetitive e.g. 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush', 'Here we go looby loo'.

Play singing songs and mime the actions e.g. 'The Grand Old Duke of York', 'The wheels on the bus'.

Tell stories which have a chorus where the children can join in e.g. 'The three little pigs'. 'I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down'.

'The gingerbread man' - 'Run, run as fast as you can...'

Say action rhymes to help children follow the actions and remember them, e.g. 'I'm a little teapot'.



## early reading experiences

It is never too early to start showing a baby books. Look at them together as soon as you can balance both the baby and the book on your knee!

The pleasure these books give will help to build the foundations for a love of books and of reading when the child gets older.

To start with, choose a few books that have clear, simple and colourful illustrations of objects or animals that are part of a baby's everyday world.

Action rhymes and nursery rhymes help develop listening skills and are an essential aspect of reading.

Whilst your child is sitting beside you, you could use the following technique to introduce a book.

Focus on different aspects of the book and it's cover.

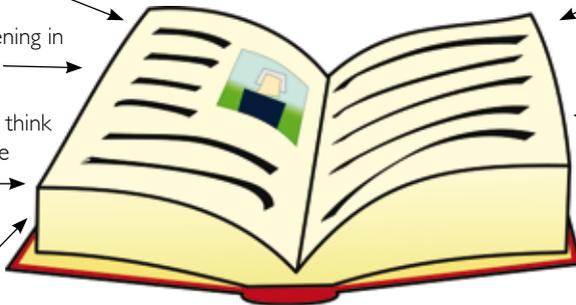
### You could do any of the following:

Point to the title.

What's happening in the pictures?

What do you think it's going to be about?

Do you like this cover?



Which way should I hold this book?

Come and show me the author's name.

Who drew the pictures in this book?

Children do not need to read 'good' books all the time. Sometimes they like to read comics or joke books or even computer manuals! It doesn't really matter what they read as long as they are reading and are enjoying it. Our most important task as parents is to give our children the opportunity to get hold of all the books they want and to let them see you enjoy reading.

There are three main phases of reading which we are concerned with at the early primary school stage, these are as follows:

- Role Play Reading
- Experimental Reading
- Early Reading

(See overleaf for more details)



## early literacy development

### role play reading

At this stage your child will:

- Show an interest in books and in the print they see around them.
- Imitate the things they see adult readers doing such as holding a book carefully, turning pages and talking out loudly as they do so.
- Retell stories they have heard as they pretend to read aloud.

At this stage of the reading process you can support your child by:

- Reading to your child as often as you can
- Enrolling your child at the local library
- Making sure your child sees you and other members of the family reading
- Helping your child to recognise his/her own name
- Selecting books that use repetition
- Helping your child to tell the story from the pictures
- Pointing to words as you read
- Placing labels around the house e.g. This is Sam's room
- Taking books with you whenever you go.

### experimental reading

At this stage your child:

- Will have memorised some familiar stories
- Can match some spoken and written words
- Will realise that the words of print always stay the same
- Will begin pointing to words.

At this stage of the reading process you can support your child by:

- Encouraging him/her to join in when you are reading a familiar story
- Point out interesting or long words in books
- Write shopping lists in front of him/her and talk about what you are doing
- Encourage him/her to find words that begin with the same letter as his/her name
- Encourage him/her to look at the title and cover of a book and guess what it might be about.

### early reading

At this stage your child may read slowly and deliberately as they try to read exactly what is on the page, rather than concentrate on the meaning. He/she is beginning to realise that it is good to comment on books they have read or listened to.

At this stage of the reading process you can help your child by:

- Emphasising the importance of making sense from his/her reading
- Encouraging him/her to take risks and 'have a go' at unknown words
- Encouraging him/her to write notes and messages for other members of the family (only when letters have been taught in school!)
- If your child makes a mistake when reading allow time for self-correction
- If the mistake makes sense, ignore it
- Playing number plate games e.g. VIVV- very interesting worms!

## **MOST IMPORTANTLY, ENSURE THAT ALL READING EXPERIENCES ARE ENJOYABLE.**

Gradually your child will progress from early reading to the transitional stage and finally on to independent reading.

If at any stage you are concerned you should consult the class teacher and your concerns will be addressed.

YOU are very important to your child in the whole reading process and please don't ever underestimate the important role which you play.

## **watching television**

There is a great variety of programmes, on all channels, which are designed for entertaining and educating young children: - Alphablocks, Numberjacks & Sesame Tree (BBC/Cbeebies).

However, we would urge you to think carefully about what your child watches. A programme watched with you is a shared experience, but one watched without you is, at best, keeping them quiet and, at worst, positively harming his/her very impressionable mind.

Teach your child to listen to a radio programme e.g. Hurlly Burly (Radio Ulster), as distinct from having the radio on as background noise. There are also some excellent story tapes available for children to listen to their favourite stories.

## **CONCLUSION**

Starting school is a happy time and parents help by playing their part. Remember you are placing your child into the trust of qualified teachers who are always willing to discuss any of your child's problems in a confidential manner at an appropriate time.

These parental contacts are actively encouraged by the teaching staff. Parents' support is essential in working with the school for your child's benefit.

Working together we can strive to provide the best quality education for your child. Many thanks for taking the time to read our booklet. Hopefully you are now better prepared for your child's entry in the new academic year.





## children learn what they live

If a child lives with criticism,  
she learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
she learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,  
he learns to feel guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
she learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise,  
she learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,  
he learns justice.

If a child lives with security,  
she learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,  
he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and  
friendship,

He or She learns to find love in the world.



# St Brigid's

PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYMONEY

St. Brigid's Primary School,  
Castle Street,  
Ballymoney,

Co. Antrim BT53 6JX

Telephone: (028) 276 62664

Fax: (028) 276 65657

Email: [info@stbrigidsp.s.ballymoney.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stbrigidsp.s.ballymoney.ni.sch.uk)

[www.stbrigidsp.s.ballymoney.com](http://www.stbrigidsp.s.ballymoney.com)