

Parents Booklet



**Saint Patrick's
Nursery School
Crossmaglen**

**St Patrick's Nursery School
Carron Road
Crossmaglen
NEWRY
Co. Down**

Tel: 028 30 861667

Principal: Mr Michael Madine

Head of Nursery: Mrs Alice Murphy

Assistant Teacher: Mrs Emma Gibney

Nursery Assistants: Mrs Patricia Murphy
Mrs Bridgette Carr
Mrs Kristina Slikiene

**Chairperson of Board
Of Governors:** Mr Andrew McConville

Possible Enrolment: 52 full-time places

Age Range: 3-4

School Management Type: Maintained

St. Patrick's Nursery School

Welcome to our school, we hope that both you and your child will enjoy what is a very special year in your child's life.

This may be your first contact with St. Patrick's School or indeed any school. It may perhaps be an anxious time for you both. We hope that, by reading this booklet, you may get the answers to so many of your questions, if not **ASK!**

Please keep this booklet as a reference as it contains most of the information you should need throughout the year.

We hope we have a very happy year together.

Michael Madine
Principal

Alice Murphy
Head of Nursery Unit

Aims for St. Patrick's Nursery School

- To provide opportunities for the children to learn in a safe, happy and harmonious environment where they can feel secure.
- To develop the whole child socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively through challenging structured play.
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- To work in partnership with parents and other professionals.
- To provide an important stepping stone between home and the wider world.



What does Nursery offer your child?

School Curriculum

It is now widely recognised that a Nursery Education is of great value. A Nursery school, with its professionally trained teachers and Nursery assistants is able to provide a wide range of opportunities for the intellectual, physical, social and emotional development of each individual child in its care.

During their time at St. Patrick's Nursery, the teacher is aware of the development of each child and his or her individual needs. Therefore, the variety and arrangement of the materials provided is of great importance. At every opportunity the teacher or assistant is there to enable the children to learn and achieve success through well-structured activities and also to stimulate their curiosity thus encouraging their intellectual development.

Personal, Social and Emotional development forms a large part of the Nursery curriculum. The teacher helps each child to form stable relationships with his peers and other adults outside the family circle, thus encouraging a sense of responsibility and consideration for others.



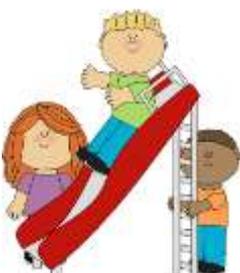
The new found independence helps to develop his self-confidence and self-esteem.

Language development is also a very important part of our Nursery curriculum. We encourage the children's use of language in a variety of situations, including the use of books, stories, poetry, rhymes and songs and varied play situations.



Within our curriculum each child will also experience daily early mathematical experiences as well as knowledge and appreciation of the world around us.

Equally important is the child's ability to use his body effectively by providing the opportunity to run, climb, slide, cycle etc., in the safety of two enclosed play areas.



Nursery school provides your child with his/her first ‘taste’ of school. It is therefore vitally important that we (you and I) ‘get it right’.

In St. Patrick’s Nursery, we welcome and encourage your support and interest in the day-to-day activities. This enables your child to gain a positive attitude towards Nursery and a sense of security in his/her new environment.

As you can see, St. Patrick’s Nursery School is not a child minding service, but a place of learning for your child under the direction of the Department of Education. Just as you may go to work each day, so will your child. His work is play – and play is hard work!

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Each day, activities will include:

- Imaginative play areas, dressing up area, home corner, restaurant, hospital etc.
- Sand and water play
- Art/creative activities
- Book corner – sharing stories
- Unit blocks and construction play
- Play dough
- Table top activities – puzzles, group games, early maths activities etc.
- Outdoor play – including physical play: climbing frames, bikes, trikes, play house, football pitch, digging area, imaginative play areas etc.



The Nursery school day also includes stories, rhymes, songs, snack time and dinnertime all of which are full of learning potential. Obviously, activities vary from day to day and are flexible.



How to support you child in preparation for starting Nursery

Home has been your child's first place of learning and you have been their first educator. We recognise this and we want to share with you some ideas to support you in teaching your child the skills which will help them to successfully transition to Nursery.

Have routines in place. Children find routine comforting and having routines set in place helps reduce their anxieties. It is particularly helpful for children to have routines in place in the morning and at bedtime, as well as routines around eating and getting ready. In the first few weeks or months of school, you will probably find that your child will be quite tired when he/she returns home. An early bedtime routine is vitally important if he/she is to be ready for the activities of the next day.

Encourage your child to become a little more independent – children should be working towards putting their own shoes and coats on. Teach your child to use the toilet independently. Encourage good hygiene skills by also teaching them how to wash their hands independently. A good way to do this is by getting them to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice so that they know how long they are to wash their hands for.

If they are not used to being away from you, perhaps you could arrange for them to spend short times with grandparents or friends while you go shopping etc.

Play with your child. Play is the basis of all learning in early childhood and so is a really important way to help develop communication as well as social and emotional skills.

Read with your child – one of the most important way to develop language and communication skills as well as a fantastic way to spend quality time with your child. Try to

read to your child as often as possible - stories, rhymes etc. and try to have a bed time story every night. Encourage your child to paint, draw, cut and paste.

Always be honest with your child, prepare them for when they will stay at Nursery on their own and please tell them that you will be back for them.

In school we encourage the children to complete a given task before leaving it. The activities are appropriate for the children and we do not expect anything unrealistic. At home perhaps, you could encourage your child in the same fashion.

Bring your child regularly to school. Children are happiest in an established routine, and regular attendance allows them to settle into their routine. However, if your child is unwell, please do not send him/her to school.

REMEMBER THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT STEP FOR YOUR CHILD AND HE/SHE NEEDS ALL YOUR SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

Tips to help children settle into Nursery School

A Guide for Parents

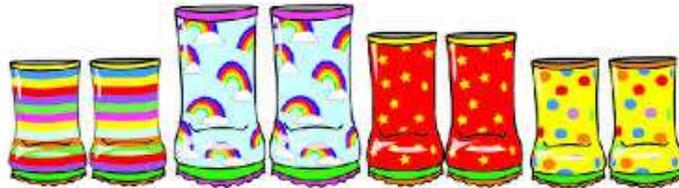
- Always talk positively about Nursery. Never allow your child to know that you are anxious or worried about him/her settling into Nursery life.
- Encourage your child to walk to the pick-up point at school. Carrying them makes it more difficult to part from mum/dad etc.
- Listen to any concerns that your child might have. Reassure him/her that you will speak to the teacher about these and that the teacher will take care of any problems. Then remind your child of the fun things that happen in Nursery.
- Do not ask your child to repeat their fears/worries to others. This helps to focus their attention on the difficulties they are experiencing and reinforces their anxieties.
- On arriving at school, reassure your child that you will be back and then leave. Prolonging parting increases your child's levels of anxiety. This usually results in both parent and child becoming upset. If you do not leave when you say you will your child will learn to display distress in the hope that you will remain. This makes parting even more difficult than before and increases the stress levels of all involved.
- Do not offer rewards for coming to school. School is normal activity and your child should be given the message that the expectation is that they will come to school and have fun – it is a reward itself.
- Parents and staff must work co-operatively to support your child effectively. Your child must experience a consistent approach otherwise they will become more anxious and confused.
- Please share any concerns that you might have with your child's teacher. We want your child to be happy in Nursery and we can only achieve this if we work together.
- Remember that beginning Nursery is a huge step for a child and it may take a little while for them to establish trusting relationships with the adults in Nursery – this is normal.
- Persevere – even when it seems difficult. Consistent, loving reassurances together with clear expectations are the best way forward.

Information about our Nursery School

NURSERY UNIFORM

Nursery children have a different uniform to main school. This is a track suit that is comfortable and makes visits to the toilet easy. Red sweatshirt (available in Mc Keown's on Castleblaney Road), white polo shirt, navy track suit bottoms. All footwear must have a Velcro or buckle fastening for safety reasons.

- Please ensure you have your child's uniform and coat clearly labelled.
- Each child must bring a coat to school every day as we go out to play on most days.
- We provide aprons for messy activities. However, please do not expect that your child will come home clean every day. It is impossible to have maximum fun in Nursery and remain clean!



SPARE CLOTHES/WELLIES

Please send in a complete set of old clothes which will be kept in school. Also send in a pair of wellies, clearly labelled on the outside with your child's name. These will be kept in school for outdoor play in the digging area.



SETTLING IN PERIOD

We operate a staggered intake during the month of September to allow each child time to settle in without being overwhelmed. Children will be admitted in small groups, beginning with the youngest children, to allow staff to build a good relationship with each child and parent.



ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES

In the interest of safety parking is not permitted in the school grounds. In order to minimise any more footfall than is absolutely necessary and in keeping with EA guidance, we will be asking parents not to enter school during the day and to abide strictly to the allotted drop off and pick up times.

When leaving and collecting your Nursery child, please park outside the school gates and walk up the path to the pick-up point. There you will be met by a member of staff. Pupils will be dropped off and picked up at the two Nursery outside doors, not inside the Nursery as previously. Parents/carers will be expected to socially distance when they are dropping off children. This will be further explained at your child's induction meeting. We appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Nursery children will come to school at the following times:

Mrs Gibney's class: 8:50-12:50

Mrs Murphy's class: 9:10-1:10

(The above times are subject to change and will be clarified during your child's induction meeting).

The staggered times allows for a safer drop-off and pick-up at the school gates where it can otherwise become very congested. We would appreciate if you adhere to these times for your child.

Nursery children cannot be dropped off by an older child. They must be picked up by an adult at home time. If someone other than a parent is to pick up your child the teacher must be informed. Tel. 028 30 861667. In the interest of Child Protection, your child will not be released to go with anyone else unless the teacher has been previously informed.

Please do not bring your child to school if he/she is ill. This can be unsettling and is unfair to other children.

SNACKS AND SCHOOL MEALS

A drink of milk and a healthy snack is provided each day – fruit, sandwiches, toast, cheese. Parents are asked for a snack fund contribution of £10.00 per month. As well as snack, this fund helps towards extras which are not included in general requisition – Christmas presents, birthdays, Easter eggs etc. The children will benefit from extra materials and treats and your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

You will receive a money pouch for each month of the school year. Please place the money pouch, with £10.00 enclosed, in the collection box in your child's class on the first Monday of each month.



NURSERY DINNER/LUNCH

Nursery dinner will be served at 12.00 noon. This is considered a very important part of the day and the children benefit greatly from the training they receive at mealtimes. The Nursery staff serves and eats with the children in the classroom. Meals cost £2.50 per day (may be subject to change.) School meals are paid through the Parentpay App. You will receive details of how to access this during your induction meeting. If you feel you are entitled to free school meals please contact Mrs Quinn, school secretary, for the appropriate forms.

You will receive a menu sheet each month – if your child has any food allergies please let us know as soon as possible.

If you prefer, your child may take lunch to school. In keeping with our healthy eating policy we ask that you do not include crisps, chocolate or fizzy drinks in your child's lunchbox. A drink of milk or water is available in school for each child.

BIRTHDAYS

Because of school holidays it is not always possible to mark each child's birthday on their particular day. However, we will try as near as possible to mark each child's special day.



TISSUES

We would be very grateful if you could bring in a box of tissues on your child's first day for use throughout the year as these are among the numerous extras which aren't supplied on requisition.

SCHOOL BAGS AND TOYS

In the interest of safety and hygiene, we ask you not to send school bags with your Nursery child. Also please do not send in toys from home as these can often be lost or broken.



BOOK BORROWING SCHEME

We have a system in place where parents/carers can help the child choose up to three books to borrow per week. The idea is that you read a book to your child as part of their bedtime routine, discussing the pictures and enjoying the special bonding time that this opportunity affords. Unfortunately this scheme had to be temporarily put on hold due to Covid regulations. We will keep you informed as to the situation for this incoming school year

SCHOOL VISITS/WALKS

It is important that the children have opportunity to observe and discuss the world around them. During the school year we will take regular walks together and make visits to places of interest around the town. You will be given information about each visit beforehand. You will also be asked to sign a consent form for each trip.

VISITORS

While exploring certain themes in Nursery school, it is sometimes appropriate for the children to meet people from different fields of work – e.g. vet, nurse, chef, dentist, or someone with an interesting hobby.



GRADUATION

Parents are invited to the Nursery for various performances, the highlight of which is probably the graduation ceremony at the end of the school year. Parents will have an opportunity to be entertained by the children before they receive their graduation certificates. This is always a very exciting day for the children and their families.



PARENTS MEETINGS

It is our aim to involve parents in their child's education and to inform them as fully as possible about their child's progress. The class teacher is available at the end of each day to discuss any concerns with parents. Arrangements can be made for more private discussions by contacting the school principal or class teacher by email to arrange an appointment.

We will have a parent/teacher during the second term to discuss your child's progress.

EDMODO

We use the online learning platform Edmodo to connect with parents, sharing information and content from school on a regular basis. You will receive login details when your child starts Nursery. Please log on regularly to get the most out of this very useful communication tool.

A monthly newsletter will keep you informed of the planned themes for each month as well as general information about events in the Nursery, and curriculum news. We encourage parents to use this information at home to reinforce what the children are learning at school.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Positive behaviour creates a secure environment within which the children can experience effective and enjoyable learning. We hope to achieve this by promoting good self-esteem and self-discipline. While endorsing everything that is included in our school positive behaviour policy, we recognise that with such a young age group certain aspects should be highlighted:

- Rules will be kept simple
- Rules will be introduced gradually.
- Rules will be firmly and consistently applied.
- Stimulating and challenging activities will be provided within a well-structured environment in order to sustain interest thus eliminating potential breeches of discipline.
- Emphasis will be on praise and positive reinforcement of acceptable standards of behaviour. Motivational stickers will be used to encourage good behaviour.
- One child will be awarded 'Star of the Week' each week to encourage confidence and self-esteem. This will be rotated so each child receives the award.

PROCEDURES USED FOR DEALING WITH UNWANTED BEHAVIOUR

- An immediate verbal response to the action.
- A gentle explanation to the child as to why the behaviour was unacceptable.
- If unacceptable behaviour persists, the child may be withdrawn from the activity or group for a short period.
- Parents will be informed if we feel that a child's behaviour is particularly worrying.
- Nursery staff and parents will work together to promote wanted behaviour.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Care is taken to ensure that as far as possible children with special needs have access to the same experiences, materials and routines as others.

Individual Education Plans are put in place to meet particular needs, and close liaison is maintained with parents, educational psychologists and other professionals involved.



CHILD PROTECTION

It is procedure for all schools to have a child protection/safeguarding policy which details steps which we take to ensure your child is safe during their time in school. The Early years child protection policy states:

- When a child starts Nursery we see this as an opportunity for an important partnership between the class teacher and parents. This partnership is a two way process with knowledge and information being shared and discussed. All information shared will remain confidential.
- If we have a concern about a child we will approach the parent/carer first to discuss the concern. Together we will plan which action is most suitable to help the child. This may involve contacting outside agencies.
- Following on is information on action that you as a parent/carer can take if you have a concern about the safety of your child.
- All children must be fully toilet trained on entering the Nursery. However, if an accident does occur it is our policy to change a child within open view of at least one other adult in the room. The classroom assistant or teacher may carry out this task.
- Parents are asked to sign a consent form giving permission for their child to be changed in the event of an accident.
- In the event of your child soiling him/herself, you (or one of the names on the contact list) will be asked to come into school to change your child.



What do you need on the First Day?

One box of tissues

A complete set of old clothes in case of an accident

One Child!

Finding time and peace of mind to share precious moments with our children often starts with a very conscious effort, as the following poem relates.

I Took His Hand and Followed

*My dishes went unwashed today
I didn't make my bed
I took his hand and followed
Where his eager footsteps led.*

*Oh yes, we went adventuring
My little child and I
Exploring all the great outdoors
Beneath the sun and sky.*

*We watched a robin feed her young
We climbed a sunlit hill
Saw cloud-sheep scamper through the sky
We plucked a daffodil*

*That my house was so neglected
That I didn't brush the stairs
In twenty years no one on earth
Will know or even care.*

*But that I've helped my little child
To noble adulthood grow
In twenty years the whole wide world
May look and see and know.*

Author unknown

If you have a concern of a Child Protection nature

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teacher for child protection Mrs Eleanor Cassidy / Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs Alice Murphy or the Principal Mr Michael Madine



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr Andrew McConville



If I am still concerned I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman
Tel: 0800 343 424



At any time a parent can talk to a Social Worker at the Gateway Team

Tel: 0800 7837745 {Free Phone from a Landline}

Or can contact the PSNI Central Referral Unit

Tel: 101