Junior Infant Information Booklet for Parents of St. Joseph's National School



Contact Details

Mulhussey Kilcock Co. Meath 01 6285513

www.mulhusseyns.ie maolhosae@gmail.com Dear Parents and Guardians,

You and your child are very welcome here to St. oseph's National School. We hope that you will enjoy and benefit from being a part of our school community in the years to come. Cuirimid fáilte romhaibh go léir. The first day at school is a very special day in the life of your child, particularly so if it marks the beginning of primary school for your first child. The first day is full of new experiences, new friends, new sounds, new rules, a new place and new people. After that every school day will be part of the ongoing process of growing and learning. We have put this information booklet together in the hope that you will find it informative and useful and help you and your child enjoy the transition to primary school. You can read through it at your leisure and if you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact us. We hope that your child will develop socially, intellectually and morally in the years ahead, and we look forward to your support during that time.

Meabh Madden Principal

ETHOS OF SCHOOL

To assist each child develop the skills to reach his/her own full potential.

To provide a school environment where each child is happy and content.

To make them aware and proud of Christian values and of their Irish heritage.

To develop their social and communication skills

To develop their civic spirit and their understanding of and respect for the environment.

ENROLMENT

St. Joseph's National School is a Catholic parish-based school that has been established with the Minister of Education and Science having as it's Patron the Most Reverend Tom Deenihan, the Bishop of Meath. It aims at promoting the full harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil — intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual. The school promotes the formation of pupils in the Catholic faith.

The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Science, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Section 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). The school enrols boys and girls.

St. Joseph's National School (Mulhussey) supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation in the school, of parental choice in relation to enrolment and respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society. Nonetheless, the enrolment procedures have regard to the resources and funding available as the school depends upon the grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Science, and it operates within the regulations laid down by the same Department and with respect to the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998.

Please review our Admissions Policy on the school website.

STAFF

There are three mainstream class teachers in St Joseph's National School (Mulhussey), including the Principal, and one full time resource teacher for pupils with special needs.

Principal: Mrs Madden Deputy Principal: Ms Beirne

Infants: Ms Kearns

1st 2^{nc} classes: Ms Farnan 3rd – 4^{tr} classes: Ms Beirne 5th - 6^{tr} classes: Mr Buckley

Special Education Teacher: Mrs Madden Special Needs Assistants: Leigh and Caoimhe

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The Board of Management provides opportunities for a partnership of parents, teachers, Patrons' representatives and community representatives in the task of school management.

Patron Nominees

Chairperson: Rev. Fr. Declan Kelly and Brian Fitzgerald

Board Nominees

Gerry Stenson and Jackie Smith

Parents Nominees

Mick Neville and Siobhan Brazil

Staff Nominees

Meabh Madden and Maeve Beirne

Parents' Nominees on the Board of Management are not on the Board to represent parents but are there as representatives of parents. These parents are full members of the Board and their role is to bring the parental perspective on all issues. As a parent, if you have a query or issue, this should be brought to the attention of the Principal and not to Parents' Nominees.

Please review our complaints procedure policy on the school website.

ANTI BULYING

Every pupil has the right to enjoy his/her time in St. Joseph's N.S. free from bullying, both in school and on their journey to and from school.

Our school will not tolerate any unkind actions or remarks, even if these were not meant to hurt.

Pupils should support each other by reporting all instances of bullying.

Bullying is regarded as a very serious matter; no child has a right to strike another, even in "self-defence".

Bullying is hurtful, deliberate and repeated, however once serious incident can be considered bullying. The stay safe rules are Say No/Walk Away/Tell.

Please review our Anti Bullying Policy on the school website.

CHILD PROTECTION

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and the *Child Protection Procedures* for *Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*, The Board of Management of St Joseph's National School (Mulhussey) have adopted their Child Protection Policy. In all cases, the most important consideration of the Board of Management is the safety and wellbeing of children. The school will:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents
 happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take
 unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or
 neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

Tusla Family and Child Agency has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children. An Garda Síochána also have statutory responsibilities for the safety and welfare of children. The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- 1. the safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
- 2. reports should be made without delay to the Agency.

Please review our Child Protection policy on the school website.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

A positive behaviour management approach will be used to promote positive behaviour and reduce inappropriate behaviour by rewarding the positive rather than the focus being on punishing the negative. This approach is based on the premise that behaviour that is rewarded is behaviour that will be repeated. The code of behaviour applies to all children including children with special needs. This policy aims to:

- · creating a climate that encourages and reinforces good behaviour
- creating a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning
- encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their learning and their behaviour
- helping young people to mature into responsible participating citizens
- building positive relationships of mutual respect and mutual support among students, staff and parents
- ensuring that the school's high expectations for the behaviour of all the members of the school community are widely known and understood

Please review our Code of Behaviour policy on the school website.

PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS

Meetings will take place in November. We ask that parents make appointments through our online administration platform Aladdin Connect. Unfortunately, teachers do not have time to have a "quick word" outside the classroom in the mornings or during class time. Also, teachers like to come to meetings prepared so please indicate in advance what the meeting will be about. Quick messages about early collections, children being unwell the previous night etc can also be relayed through the office. We ppreciate all parents' cooperation with this matter.

PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE

Pupils are expected to be punctual and to attend school every day. Good school attendance is crucial to your child's progress.

Doors open: 9.10am School start time: 9:20am

Finishing time for infants: 2:00pm Finishing time for 1st-6th: 3:00pm

Morning break: 11:00am Lunch break: 12:30pm

Schools are required to submit Student Absence Reports four times each year on those students with serious attendance issues that have been identified during the current academic year i.e. students falling within the following criteria:

- a student has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for any reason
- a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of six or more days
- the school has expelled a student
- a principal is concerned about a student's attendance

The Principal has no discretion in this. Parents/Guardians are now obliged by law to provide a written explanation on their child's absence to the school. Staff should remain vigilant so that risk students are identified early.

If a pupil misses 15 days a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian informing them of the missed days. Another letter will follow once twenty days are missed. A meeting between parents and Principal may be set up if deemed necessary.

Going home early: Written consent is necessary if a child has to leave the school during the day. Children must be collected by an adult if they are leaving school early and they must be signed out. Children will not be released into the care of another juvenile. We do this solely in the interest of each child's safety. Parents dropping in lunches or collecting children early from school need to check in at the office. Our secretary will bring the lunch down to the classroom and collect children leaving early. Parents should sign the sign out books in the office. Parents collecting children after 1pm need to call to the main entrance as the office will be closed at 1pm daily.

Office Hours

Ann, our secretary works from 9.30 to 1pm daily. We ask parents not to call on the phone between 1pm and 3pm unless it is an emergency as all staff will be in the classrooms teaching. General queries can be emailed to the school on maolhosae@gmail.com. If you are running late, please call the school at 3pm.

BOOKLIST BILLS

We will communicate more information about the cost of book bills in due course. Parents can also make an online transfer by adding your child's name as a reference.

IBAN: IE57AIBK93317114618081

BIC no: AIBKIE 2D Many thanks.

HEAD LICE

Head Lice is unfortunately common in all primary schools. Where possible tie your child's hair back. Check your child's hair weekly. If infected, inform the school and treat your child's hair.

CHILDREN UNWELL IN SCHOOL

Please do not send children to school unwell. If your child is too sick to go out to yard he/she is too sick to be in school. Exceptions are made in the case of limb injuries. Otherwise all children are expected to go out to yard. When the Class Teacher or Principal feels that a child is not well enough for school either as a result of becoming sick or following an accident the Parents/Guardians will be contacted immediately. In the event of a serious illness/accident an ambulance will be called and the child will be brought to hospital. This highlights the importance of having up to date contact information. If your address or phone number changes, please notify the school so we can amend our records.

CONTACT NUMBERS/MOBILE PHONES

It is very important that you keep us up to date with contact numbers in case of an emergency. Remember to let us know, if you change your mobile or landline number or address. If your child has a phone in school, it must be put on the teacher's desk and turned off until your child leaves the school building. We take no responsibility for lost phones. We also discourage children bringing in toys or games from home unless the teacher asks them to do so. They can be the cause of conflict in the class, they can also be lost or damaged.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Tracksuit: Navy jumper with crest/Navy bottoms/Runners

School jumpers are available to purchase at Books and Gifts in Kilcock.

There will be no school uniform worn for the month of June, children can wear plain navy shorts and the blue polo shirt as an alternative.

Label everything: Young children frequently misplace their belongings. To help us ensure these belongings are returned to their rightful owners please ensure your child's name is written on everything they own.

Jewellery: For safety reasons the only items of jewellery allowed are a watch and/or stud earring.

We are an active school so we encourage children to wear runners to school daily. Black runners can be purchased at most stores. We ask parents to have a change of clothes and socks in schoolbags when the weather is bad in the event of a fall.

HEALTHY EATING

We operate a healthy eating policy in this school as the children find it easier to concentrate when their diet contains less sugar and E numbers. Treats are not allowed in school unless there is a special occasion, parents will be informed. We ask for your cooperation in this regard.

Choose a lunch box and beaker/bottle that can be easily opened. Please label both. For safety reasons glass bottles are not allowed nor are children allowed to microwave food. **Note**: in order that you know what your child has eaten, each child brings home any food leftovers.

Foods not allowed:

Cereal bars/Fizzy drinks/Sweets/Chocolate/Crisps/Chewing gum/Cakes/Popcorn/nuts/nut based products/eggs/egg based products

ALLERGIES

We have children in the school with nut allergies so we ask that you do not send in food containing nuts.

Please review our Healthy Eating policy on the school website.

BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS

Teachers do not take responsibility for distributing invitations to birthday parties. It is the parent's responsibility regarding this. Please do not come into the class and distribute invitations as it can upset other children if they are not invited and cause conflict and hurt in the class. The same applies to giving out presents after being on holiday. We do not facilitate birthday parties in school. Please do not send in cake or birthday treats to be distributed in class.

EMERGENCY CLOSING

The safety of the children is of primary importance at all times. Should an emergency closing be appropriate (e.g. in the event of no heat, snow, health pandemic etc.) the decision to close the school will be taken by the Principal and the Chairperson at the earliest possible time so as to maximise notice to parents/guardians.

HOME SCHOOL LINKS

Parents Association: We have a very active Parent Association. The Association is actively involved in helping the school. It is a group of parents from the school who give up their time to help improve our school and fundraise on behalf of the school. They meet on a monthly basis.

Website: Our school website address is www.mulhusseyns.ie

Newsletter: Our school newsletter is circulated monthly.

Aladdin: Aladdin is our online administration system. It uses state of the art security to safeguard information entered by you and the school and data is stored and processed in strict compliance with Irish data protection laws. It is used for the following:

- 1. Pupil Data
- 2. Attendance
- 3. School reports
- 5. Texts and emails

Texts are normally sent to the mother's mobile, unless otherwise requested.

Parent Teacher meetings: meetings are usually held late November.

Communication: We are currently using Class Dojo for day to day home-school communications.

CURRICULAR SUBJECTS:

In 1999 a new revised curriculum was introduced into Irish Primary Schools.

The Primary School Curriculum consists of 6 curricular areas and these are further divided into 11 subjects.

Your child will be learning in the following areas and subjects:

- 1. Language: Gaeilge & English.
- 2. Mathematics: Mathematics.
- 3. Social, Environmental & Scientific Education (S.E.S.E): History, Geography & Science.
- 4. Arts Education: Music, Visual Arts and Drama.
- 5. Physical Education (P.E.): Physical Education.
- 6. Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E)
- 7. Religious Education is taught every day.

The curriculum aims to foster the development of key skills in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, investigation and interaction. It is also the aim of the curriculum to ensure that children's experience of school will lead them to value and enjoy learning as a lifelong process.

HELPING YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR SCHOOL

To help your child cope with school you should ensure that he/she is as independent as possible - physically, emotionally and socially. If he can look after himself/herself in these areas he/she will feel secure and confident and settle in readily. Your child should be able to do the following independently before starting school. It is a mistake to send a child to school who is not emotionally ready for it.

Can he/she:

- · Sit and listen to a short story.
- Button and unbutton his/her coat and hang it up.
- Use the toilet without help.
- Share toys and playthings with others and "take turns".
- Tidy up and put away playthings.
- Also encourage personal hygiene and cleanliness. Your child should know how to flush the toilet and wash his/her hands.
- Open and close his/her lunchbox, drink container, without help.

SCREEN TIME (Time spent on televisions, phones, computers, Ipads etc) Many organisations and professionals, including The World Health Organisation, HSE, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists and Speech Therapists, recommend we watch carefully the total amount of screen time young children have daily. There are many reasons for this. The more screen time children have the less time they spend: • In physical activity, which can effect brain development, gross motor skills and general health.

- Socialising, which can therefore effect speech and language development, social skills, emotional intelligence etc
- Playing, therefore children's creativity and imagination, problem solving skills, fine motor skills and organisation skills are not as well developed.
- Engaging with books, handling books, listening to others read and this has an impact on language development.

HOW TO HANDLE THE FIRST DAY

Tips for Parents

- Prepare as much as possible the night before, the uniform, shoes, snack for break and lunches. Keep the atmosphere at home as calm as possible.
- Accompany your child to school. Time your arrival to allow time for settling in but avoid a long wait before class begins.
- Most children today have experience of play-school and usually settle into primary school without any difficulty. The infant class teacher is skilled at identifying the reluctant or fearful child and will handle any difficulties. Remember this is a common situation for them and allow their expertise and experience to guide you.
- Let your child observe your confidence in the teacher, they will take their cue from you.
- Leave your child after a short settling in period and remind him/her of the collection arrangement. Resist your natural tendency to stay with your child, particularly if they appear uncomfortable. The teacher can distract and humour him more easily when you are not around.
- Make sure to follow your collection arrangements.
- Teacher should be told of any change in collection arrangements sudden unavoidable changes in routine should be phoned to the school office.

JUNIOR INFANT CURRICULUM

It is important, particularly during the first year, that parents understand what the aims of the school are, as many may be expecting too much in the way of academic learning. Our first year in school 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.
- 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.

SOME IMPORTANT AREAS OF EARLY LEARNING LANGUAGE

In order to prepare and support your child on his/her journey to literacy (in both English & Gaeilge), we encourage using the 3 elements of language learning:

• Communicating • Understanding • Exploring and Using

These elements provide the basis for learning across the curriculum. Through listening and speaking, children learn to talk about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a sequential way. Children also learn to listen to each other. Concepts about print are absorbed by your child through listening to language around them:

- 1. Nursery Rhymes are particularly important to help with sounds and patterns in sounds.
- 2. Experiencing and using books seeing the way books work, the cover, the opening to the book, the turning of the pages, noticing the conventional leftto-right orientation of print and pictures.
- 3. Noticing that print (and pictures, that help meaning) contain a message.
- 4. Becoming gradually aware of those other 'squiggles' on the page punctuation marks.
- 5. Making squiggles, marks, drawings and paintings with paint, crayons, pencils, pens and chalk. All of these activities will help your child to begin reading and writing. We encourage you to support and participate in his/her exciting new journey.

It is important to say that 'readiness' is a key factor for your child in order for him/her to experience success on his/her journey to literacy. Be willing to work with the teacher, who is the best judge of the pace to which your child is best suited. Every child flourishes at his/her own pace and these first years of early education lay the crucial foundation for every child's successful journey. With all the above as a good strong foundation, we will guide your child to become proficient with the many reading strategies in a guided, progressive way.

We use levelled, engaging readers and provide an enjoyable environment that will encourage your child to read with fluency. 'Reading fluency is the ability to read expressively and meaningfully as well as accurately and with the appropriate speed'. (Marie Clay) This engagement in reading lends itself as a natural course to your child expressing himself/herself in the written word/form.

You Can Help....

- Talk to your child naturally and casually at home, in the shop, in the car, etc. Use every occasion to describe what is going on around him. Enlarge his/her vocabulary by naming new objects, identifying colours. Children understand many more words than those in their spoken vocabulary. Question your child and encourage answers with more than one or two words. Remember that all the time your child is absorbing the language he hears.
- Learn to LISTEN to your child and get him/her to LISTEN to others.
- Introduce him/her gently to the ideas of Why? How? When? Where? If? etc. These demand more advanced language structures.
- Children love to recite nursery rhymes or poems. These feature strongly in the Junior Infant programme. Children get great benefit, as well as enjoyment from reciting such rhymes and retelling stories at home.

FIRST STEPS IN READING

Ability to read is the foundation for all future progress in the school system. However, learning to read is a gradual process and a lot of preparatory work must be done before a child is introduced to the 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 something to be enjoyed. It should never start as a chore for the small child.

You can Help..

- · Have attractive colourful books in the home.
- Read your child a variety of stories from time to time. Your child will get to associate these wonderful tales with books and reading.
- Look at the pictures with your child and talk to him/her about what they say.
- Read him/her nursery rhymes. He/she will learn them off his/her own bat. Above all, don't push your child with his early reading. You may turn your child against it for evermore.
- Remember that the teacher is the best judge of what rate of progress is best suited to each child.

PHONICS/ LETTER SOUNDS

- In supporting your child with this element of the English Curriculum, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the correct letter sounds.
- You can do so by watching the Jollylearning video on youtube of the 42 letter sounds. In this video the lady makes clear the 42 Jolly Phonics sounds and how to pronounce them.
- Sometimes children will attach a u sound to some consonants, particularly p, l, t, c, k, s, h, m, f. This can then cause difficultly blending the sounds together. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ksblMiliA8

GETTING READY FOR WRITING

Making letters on paper is not easy for the small child. He must learn to hold the pencil properly and make regular shapes. A child's hand and finger muscles are only gradually developing at this stage.

You Can Help...

• The child must develop the ability to get the hand and eye working together. This is very important.

Get him/her manipulating toys like:

- (a) Jigsaws, Lego, beads to thread etc
- (b) Plasticine (Marla) to make his/her own shapes
- (c) A colouring book and thin crayons (d) Sheets of paper that he 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 later. (See picture below)
- Don't discourage left-handedness. If that is your child's definite natural inclination, don't attempt to change it.

MATHEMATICS

Your child learns to understand and solve problems with the mathematics curriculum. Your child is busy with early mathematical activities such as sorting, matching, comparing and ordering different objects. For example, you might see your child arranging toys in lines on the floor or organising toys in groups according to different types, colours or sizes. These activities give your child a strong foundation for learning in:

- Number [counting, comparing and ordering.]
- Algebra [copying and adding to patterns of colour, shape, size and number using beads or blocks or by drawing and colouring, eg 2 blue 1 red .]
- Measurement[working with length, weight, capacity, time and money.]
- Shape and space [working with 2- dimensional and 3 dimensional shapes]
- Data [sorting objects and understanding and making charts and graphs]

You can help your child to learn at home by asking them to help you with sorting and matching activities eg tidying toys into the correct boxes, sorting the washing into bundles. Teaching your child counting rhymes and songs and making up actions together to go with the words.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

In SESE [history, geography and science] the emphasis is on connecting learning with the child's immediate environment. In history children's curiosity about the past is awakened by exploring their personal and family history eg listening to stories about their grandparents when they were young. In geography and science the local and wider environment provides many opportunities for children's investigations which help them to understand and care for the world. In SESE your child uses investigative skills such as observing, questioning, investigating and experimenting, estimating and measuring, classifying, recording and communicating and so works like a scientist, historian and geographer from a young age.

SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION [SPHE]

Social, personal and health education deals with your child's personal development, health and wellbeing. It helps children understand how to care for themselves, how to respect and relate to others, and how to deal with different feelings. It helps your child to learn and develop a sense of responsibility for his/ her actions. SPHE includes Relationships and Sexuality Education [RSE]- an important part of all children's development.

ARTS EDUCATION

The three subjects visual arts, music and drama give children opportunities to develop artistic and creative skills by participating in different kinds of activities, eg drawing, painting, constructing, dramatic play, singing, clapping or exploring the sounds made by different musical instruments. The focus is not so much on the work your child produces [the product] but on what your child learns by engaging in creative activity [the process].

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education in the Infant classes helps your child to learn about and develop more control over his/her movements, to learn how to co-operate with others and to develop important social skills such as sharing, relying on others and team work. Your child will participate in different physical activities such as:

- Athletics [including running, jumping and throwing].
- Dance [including exploring, creating and performing dance].
- Gymnastics [including balancing, moving in different directions].
- Games [including ball handling, kicking, carrying and striking and playing simple playground games].
- Outdoor and adventure activities [including walking, following directions and following simple trails].

Aquatics (We attend swim lessons at Aura in Trim in January every year 1st - 6th class)

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

We welcome all children into our school. Early identification of learning difficulties is crucial. All children will be regularly screened through teacher observations, administration of standardised and observational tests. The MIST test is administered to Senior Infants annually to screen for literacy difficulties. Parental consultation and support is a vital aspect of our learning support programme.

The Special Education teacher and the teaching staff prioritise which children need help with literacy, numeracy, language or social skills training.

Please review our Special Education policy on the school website.

HOMEWORK

Homework is generally based on class related work or work already covered in class. It should contain a balance between reading, learning and writing. Time devoted to reading and learning is as important as written work. Homework is given from Mondays to Thursdays and generally is not given at weekends unless it has been neglected during the week, or unless exceptional circumstances such as projects.

There will be no written homework for the month of June, therefore we expect a high standard of homework from September to May.

The Special Education Teacher will occasionally give homework to their allocated pupils but only as a reinforcement of class work. Reading is routinely given as homework and should be accorded priority consideration.

If homework causes stress or worry to the child, parents are encouraged to convey these anxieties to the class teacher. If homework cannot be completed on a particular night, parents are asked to forward a message. Some homework may be self correcting. Children who do not complete homework satisfactorily may be required to re do this work during lunch break. Parents are advised to supervise and check homework nightly.

Homework passes may be given at the teacher's discretion. In general,

homework will encompass a wide spectrum of learning experiences such as reading, writing, tables, spelling, learning 'by heart', drawing, collecting information, colouring and finishing class work.

Junior infants 0-15 minutes Senior infants 0-20 minutes $1^{st}-2^{nd}$ 0-40 minutes $3^{rd}-4^{th}$ 0-50 minutes $5^{th}-6^{th}$ 0-60 minutes

Please review our Homework policy on the school website.