



What Should My Child Know Before Starting School

This is a new and exciting time for you and your child and the beginning of a unique educational adventure. In Ireland, children can begin primary school education at the age of 4. However, if at all possible, a later start is advised. Children may seem academically 'ready' to begin school, but the more social and emotional aspect of your child's personality and development may not match their intellectual strengths.

The following are examples of the expectations St. Multose NS have on incoming Junior Infants:

1. Simple motor skills

Your child may have been doing this at preschool or crèche but it's also good to have them practice their motor skills at home. Activities such as cutting with scissors, baking with you where they measure out ingredients, gluing, working with beads, LEGO etc. are all good for motor skill practice.

2. Be able to sit still and pay attention for short periods

They are going to have to be ready to sit still and pay attention in varying degrees each day. A number of activities throughout the day will be tactile and require lots of movement. Other activities will require a certain amount of concentration. A good way of building this habit is to read books together. While you read, discuss the story and the characters and get them to point things out in the book.

3. Be independent

By this we mean by being able to do things on their own. If there's something that your child is struggling with, then practice with them before school starts. E.g. sit down with your child for lunch when she or he can practice eating from their lunch box and drink themselves.

4. Go to the toilet themselves

If your child has been a bit reliant on your help with the toilet, now is the time to get them comfortable with wiping their own bottom and making sure they know how to properly wash their hands. Of course, accidents happen, but your child must be able to use the bathroom independently.

5. Put on and take off their coat or jacket

It is important to make sure that your child can zip/button up the jacket/coat they will have at school. Practice this skill before they come to school. This will allow them to utilise the time they have to play outside on yard. Your child will be in a multi grade class so it is important that they are able to manage as much of the everyday skills independently as possible.

6. Be able to take turns/social skills

Try to make sure your child is comfortable and able to take turns as this is something that happens in school. At home or on a play date, you could use a timer on your phone to help kids know that it's time for their turn or now it's time for them to hand over a toy. Simple board games are also a good way of teaching your child to take a turn. Social skills and turn taking are key skills and if your child has attended playschool, they will have a good foundation in playing with others.

7. Be comfortable with sharing

On play dates over the summer, observe them and reinforce sharing skills so that they are happy to do this when they start school. Ask your child if he or she would mind sharing certain toys with a friend. If your child says no, explain why they should be willing to share. If they say yes, praise them for being kind and considerate.

8. Recognise their name

Even if your child can't read yet, it's good for them to be able to recognise their name on their lunchbox or coat or other belongings. We encourage all belongings are labelled with your child's name. Losing an item and not being able to recognise their name, may cause undue stress to your child. Practice their name with them so they can start to recognise those letters.

9. Know how to open their lunch box and drink bottle

This is an easy one to practice in the run up to school. This may seem a trivial task to you and me but is a vital skill for your child. You should also ensure that the items in your lunch box are easy to open e.g. yogurt/fruit pots.

10. Be able to tell a Teacher if they need something

Talk to your child about being confident to tell a teacher when they need something, e.g. to use the bathroom or when they're having trouble understanding a lesson. If your child is very shy then work with them on putting their hand up so they know how to do that. Communicating their needs will help them settle and become more comfortable expressing themselves in front of their peers.

11. Follow simple instructions

Listening skills and the ability to follow instructions are important elements of communication. Your child should be able to retain and carry out 2-3 instructions at a time. This will gradually increase throughout the year.

12. Understand and retell simple stories

Reading each day to your child each day developed vocabulary, language acquisition and imagination. Encourage your child to chat about their day, what happened on outings, a day out with granny/granny. This is the basis for story telling.