

First and second classes 1

A summary of your child's learning in first and second classes in the 6 curriculum areas is provided below, along with some suggestions on how you can support your child's learning at home.

LANGUAGE

Through language, your child learns to communicate – in English and Irish. Your child learns to listen, to speak, to read and to write in both languages. These language skills provide a basis for learning other languages and are important for learning in all other areas of the curriculum.

Your child continues to **develop listening and speaking skills** through talk and discussion which increases your child's knowledge of words and develops his/her listening skills. He or she learns, for example, *to listen, to start conversations, to take turns, to use language correctly in social situations, to describe, to ask and answer questions and to express feelings* in real and play situations.

Your child is becoming a more confident reader and writer in the first language of the school. **He/she learns to use many different strategies to help with reading.** One of these strategies is called 'developing phonological awareness.' Using this strategy, your child learns how to break down and sound out new words in order to read them. Your child also **writes for many different reasons** now, perhaps a shopping list, a diary entry, a letter or email to a friend or a story.

In second class, in schools where the teaching is mostly through English, most children begin to read in Irish, starting with picture books before moving on to single word and single sentence books. They use many of the skills and strategies they have learned in English to improve their reading and writing skills in Irish.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- listening to and talking with your child and encouraging him/her to tell you more about different things that interest him/her, for example, asking about a favourite pastime/hobby
- reading with your child and asking questions to check understanding. When you are out and about with your child, you could read signs and notices and in this way draw his/her attention to print all around
- asking your child to tell you some new words or sentences he/she has learned in Irish at school
- watching cartoons and children's programmes on TG4 with your child, which will get him/her used to hearing Irish being spoken naturally.



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MATHEMATICS

Your child learns to examine, understand and solve problems with the Mathematics Curriculum. In first and second class children continue to **work with real objects** like blocks, cubes, crayons, counters, coloured shapes, sand and water and to build their knowledge and understanding of new content in:

- Number (including counting, comparing and ordering, learning about place value, adding and subtracting numbers, and working with fractions)
- Algebra (including exploring and using number patterns, for example, odd and even numbers or adding ten to a given number)
- Measurement (including working with length, weight, capacity, time and money)
- Shape and space (including working with 3-D shapes and 2-D shapes and angles)
- Data (including understanding, interpreting and making charts and graphs).

Your child builds on what he/she has learned in the infant classes as he/she works with patterns, measurement, shape and space and data. Your **child now works with bigger numbers** and so learns about place value, meaning that a number like 14 is made up of 1 ten and 4 units.

Your child needs to understand this so that he/she can, for example, add two or more bigger numbers together more easily. Your child will also learn to subtract using these bigger numbers and the way children learn to do this now may be different to the way you learned it. If in doubt, remember you can always ask the teacher!

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- helping your child to break numbers into tens and units by setting out a number of objects like crayons or pencils and using elastic bands to group objects together into bundles of ten. Help him/her to see that any objects that are left over are units
- encouraging your child to estimate by, for example, asking him/her to think about and guess how many steps it might take to get to a particular point while out on a walk. Stop halfway through and ask if he/she wants to change his/her guess. You can also ask your child to estimate whether a bag of flour is heavier than a bag of potatoes you have in the kitchen and check his/her estimate by weighing the objects.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION (SESE)

In SESE (history, geography and science) your child continues to **learn from his/her immediate environment**. Children may explore the history of buildings in the community such as their school, discuss how different people in the community help them or observe the seasonal changes in trees and plant life in the local area. **Using investigative skills encourages the budding Scientist, Historian and Geographer in your child**. Such skills include *questioning, observing, predicting, investigating and experimenting, estimating and measuring, classifying and recording and communicating*.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- helping your child to observe and investigate at home, for example, grow seeds and bulbs, or test how long it takes to do certain activities, or investigate whether materials are magnetic or not
- encouraging your child to explain to you about topics he/she has been working with in science, history and geography. Children remember what they have learned by having the chance to explain their learning to another person.

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ARTS EDUCATION

In arts education (visual arts, music and drama) your child continues to have many opportunities to **be creative and to develop his/her imagination through art activities, music and drama. 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).** In first and second class, your child continues to explore and experiment in art and music and has many opportunities for **taking part in imaginative and dramatic play.**

This curriculum area encourages your child to **listen to, look at and respond to** the music, artwork and dramatic expression of others in the class, as well as the work of older children and adults.



You can help your child to learn at home by:

- listening to different types of music during car journeys or while doing jobs at home. Ask your child whether he/she likes the songs or piece of music and allow him/her to decide what music he/she would like to listen to
- encouraging your child to use a range of tools such as crayons, paints, playdough, pens, pencils, glue, old fabrics and so on, to express him/herself artistically
- watching children's drama on television with your child or taking your child to see films, plays, concerts and art exhibitions in the community and talking about what they have seen and their response to it.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education provides your child with further opportunities to **learn important social skills through physical activity.** Your child is increasingly able to use his/her body in different ways and can now take part in small-sided versions of adult team games such as basketball or Gaelic football and in co-operative games. Through participating in a range of physical activities, children learn to **improve their own performance and to choose the types of activities they will enjoy** in their personal lives. Your child participates 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 and in sequence alone and with others and moving using apparatus such as mats and benches)
- Games (including ball handling, kicking, carrying and striking, and playing small-sided versions of games)

- Outdoor and adventure activities (including walking, following directions and maps and following simple trails and obstacle courses).²

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- encouraging your child to be active at home, for example, walking, jumping, running, playing games and taking part in local sports activities which will help your child to develop a sense of belonging to the community
- encouraging your child to make up and play games with other children and discuss the need for rules and deciding on team strategies.

²In aquatics children learn about safety in the water and how to move in the water through play and using their arms and legs. To suit individual school circumstances, the curriculum advocates that children should have opportunities to develop water based movement skills at some point in their primary schooling.

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SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)

Social, Personal and Health Education, or SPHE, deals with your child's **personal development, health and well being**. SPHE helps your child to learn and **develop a sense of responsibility for his/her actions**. He/she also learns **how to respect and relate to others and how to deal with feelings**. SPHE includes **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)** – an important part of all children's development. **Each school has an RSE policy** which outlines what will be taught in RSE and when certain content will be introduced.



The SPHE Curriculum helps your child to care for him/herself, for example, through learning about the importance of food for growth, health and energy and through discussing and practising appropriate strategies for keeping safe. He/she is encouraged to develop growing independence. Your child also learns to develop a sense of place in the school and local community, to care for the local and wider environment and to become familiar with and more critical of different types of information media.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- talking to your child about different issues which affect him/her, such as relationships with family and friends, what is happening in school and keeping safe. Through discussion help your child to find ways of dealing with problems such as making up with a friend after a row or dealing with unsafe situations. Through such discussions, your child will learn that he/she can talk to you about anything
- giving your child opportunities to be independent and to make decisions such as when to do homework, what to do with pocket money and what to play and do when friends are visiting. Talk to your child and encourage him/her to review these decisions in order to make thoughtful choices
- encouraging healthy eating habits through providing a healthy lunch for school and at other mealtimes. Breakfast is a particularly important meal as it starts your child on a healthy day.

Ask your child's teacher about other ways you can help your child to learn at home in first and second class. Ask other parents what works well for them.