

Third and fourth classes 1

A summary of your child's learning in third and fourth 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

In English, your child continues to develop *listening and speaking skills* through talk and discussion. He/she learns to: *listen, initiate conversations, question, tell stories, summarise ideas, express and explain feelings, give instructions, argue, persuade and present ideas*. By now, your child should be a fairly confident reader and writer. He/she **reads a broad range of reading material** such as short stories, novels, poems, plays, newspaper and magazine articles, information material and also uses the internet to expand the range of reading material. Your child **writes for many different reasons and in many different ways**, for example, letters, diary entries, poems, stories, newspaper and magazine articles and book and film reviews. Your child is increasingly able to look over first drafts of his/her writing and with the help of both the teacher and classmates, **finds ways to improve his/her writing and make the message clearer**. Using a computer can really help with this writing process.

In Irish, your child continues to **develop conversation and communication skills** and to build vocabulary through working with themes such as **mé féin, sa bhaile, an scoil, bia, an aimsir, an teilifís, siopadóireacht, caitheamh aimsire, éadaí agus ócáidí speisialta (myself, home, school, food, the weather, television, shopping, pastimes, clothes and special occasions)**. Your child is also increasingly able to read and write short pieces in Irish.

In schools where the teaching is mostly through Irish, your child reads and responds to a broader range of reading material. He/she also writes in Irish for many different reasons and in many different ways.



You can help your child to learn at home by:

- encouraging your child to read a range of material in both languages, visiting the local library weekly and asking your child questions about his/her reading. Although your child is older, her/she will still enjoy sharing books with you. For example, you could take turns in reading aloud pages from a novel and thus sustain reading over a period of time
- showing you value writing by creating many reasons for writing in the home, for example, writing lists and notes, writing letters and emails to friends and families, writing diary entries, planning family events in writing, writing book and cinema reviews and discussing them together and so on
- helping your child to use the computer at home or in the local library to write emails or for other kinds of personal writing and to revise, edit and improve his/her writing. Help your child also to use the internet to search for information and find interesting and varied reading material.

Information for parents

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MATHEMATICS

Your child learns to understand and solve problems with the Mathematics Curriculum. Children continue to **work with real materials** such as counters, cubes, fraction tiles, measurement equipment, number games, playing cards and mathematical software to build their knowledge and understanding of new content in:

- Number (including learning about place value, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers, working with fractions and decimals)
- Algebra (including adding to and using number patterns and sequences, for example, 1, 3, 9, 27...)
- Measurements (including working with length, area, weight, capacity, time and money)
- Shape and space (including working with 3-D shapes and 2-D shapes and lines and angles)
- Data (including understanding, interpreting and making charts and graphs and learning about probability and chance)

There is a continued emphasis on **linking your child's learning to real-life practical tasks** involving mathematics, for example, while working with measurement your child may work to solve real life problems such as measuring a room and figuring out how much wallpaper would be needed or working out how to adapt a recipe which is provided for four people when cooking for six!

From fourth class onwards, **children learn to use a calculator** to perform large number calculations which they have already learned to do on paper. The calculator is **not a substitute for learning how to add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers** but rather allows children to check their estimations and answers and leads to greater understanding of the way numbers work. **Using a calculator helps children to focus on the problem to be solved and on finding the best way to do so.**

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- giving your child shopping receipts and bills with the totals removed and asking him/her to estimate the total cost by rounding the figures to the nearest Euro. Encourage him/her to use a calculator to check the answer. He/she could use the calculator as you place items in the trolley to keep a running total of what you are spending. In this way, your child will see a very practical use for the calculator!
- encouraging your child to collect, analyse and present data in natural ways by, for example, showing him/her how to record time spent on watching television and on physical activity over a given week. Help him/her to make a chart in which he/she writes the time spent on each activity on each day. At the end of the week talk to your child about what the information shows
- asking questions which encourage your child to use mental mathematic strategies learned in school, for example, on a car journey, you could ask your child *how far will we travel in three hours if you travel at a speed of 55 miles an hour? or if petrol costs €1.09 a litre how much will it cost you to put 30 litres in the tank?*



Information for parents

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SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION (SESE)

In SESE (history, geography and science) children continue to use the home, classroom and local environment as a resource for learning. Their **learning broadens to include exploration of wider environments**, in Ireland and beyond. Children use the same investigative skills of *questioning, observing, predicting, investigating and experimenting, estimating and measuring, classifying and recording and communicating* while **working as Scientists, Historians and Geographers**. Photographs, real objects and information sources, such as encyclopaedias, atlases, computer software and internet searches, all help children to explore a world beyond their own local environment. **New learning builds on and links to what has been learned before**, for example, in geography, children may learn about the physical features of another area in Ireland but will connect this to what they have already learned by comparing and contrasting it with features in their own local area. Likewise, in history, children may discover how the lives of people have changed over time in their own area and in other places through exploring a topic like *homes*.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- watching the daily news or documentaries on television with your child. You could, for example, use a map or a globe to find countries which have featured in the programme or pick one news item which is particularly interesting and use reference books or web sites to find out more about the story and the people and places involved
- involving your child in designing and making things around the home, such as a shelf or a book table
- visiting areas of historical interest in the local area and museums, and talking to your child about the history behind the places and objects you find.



ARTS EDUCATION

In the three subjects 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**. Your child's **active and enjoyable participation** in artistic activities is emphasised. As in the junior classes, **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)**. Your child improves and refines the skills he/she has already learned through exploring and experimenting in art, music and drama lessons. He/she works with a greater variety of artistic material and experiences a broader range of musical and dramatic activity. 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 other children and adults.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- encouraging your child's interest in listening to or performing music, for example, listening to CDs, singing songs, playing the recorder or another musical instrument
- encouraging your child to express him/herself artistically by providing materials and space to do so. Give your child the responsibility of tidying up when he/she is finished
- watching children's drama on television with your child or going to see films, plays, concerts and art exhibitions in the community and talking about what you have seen and your response to it.

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In **third and fourth class** your child again participates in a **range of physical activities, both indoor and outdoor**, 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 on maps and following trails and obstacle courses).³

These activities help your child to understand and appreciate physical activity. There is an **emphasis on fun and enjoyment in P.E. lessons** and your child learns to **work together with others to improve overall group performance**. At the same time, your child is encouraged to **improve and refine his/her own individual performance** in various physical activities at his/her own pace. Through experiencing a **broad range of physical activity**, you'll find that your child may like some sports or games more than others. These may then well be played outside of school and on into adult life.

³In 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.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- building time into the day for physical activity at home and encouraging your child to participate in activities organised by local clubs and organisations including swimming and athletic clubs, football, hurling, soccer or basketball clubs, and Irish dancing and other types of dance classes. This will help your child to develop a sense of belonging in the community
- taking your child on outdoor activities such as swimming and visits to adventure playgrounds.



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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**. It helps children to **understand how to care for themselves, how to respect and relate to others and how to deal with their 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. It includes helping children to learn about the changes that take place in their bodies at different stages of development, for example, at puberty. **Each school has an RSE policy** which outlines what will be taught in RSE and when certain content will be introduced.



Your child learns more about caring for him/herself and about what makes him/her a unique person, such as, strengths and weaknesses, and likes and dislikes. He/she explores and discusses the factors that influence personal decisions and choices and discusses why and how adults can make decisions and set boundaries. Children also develop a greater sense of their own contribution to the school and local community, learn about the lives of people in other places, and to care for the local and wider environment. They also learn to think about and to question the role and influence of media sources in their lives.

You can help your child to learn at home by:

- 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
- talking with your child about what is in the newspaper or on the television/radio/or a film you may have watched together. Ask your child about his/her feelings, views and concerns
- talking with your child about different issues which affect him/her, for example, relationships with family and friends, what is happening in school, keeping safe and the dangers involved in the misuse of substances such as drugs or alcohol. Through discussion help him/her to find appropriate ways of dealing with any problems that may arise such as bullying or peer pressure. Through such discussions, your child will learn that he/she can talk to you about anything.

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