



**Cahergal N.S.**  
Scoil Náisiúnta An Chathair Sheal

**Cahergal, Tuam, Co. Galway**

[www.cahergalns.scoilnet.ie](http://www.cahergalns.scoilnet.ie)

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Roll No: 17807r

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17/09/2020

Dear parents and guardians,

I hope that this letter finds you all well. I'm sure you'll all be looking forward with excitement and a little bit of apprehension to your child's first day of school. It is a big day in children's and parent's lives and I know it can be an emotional and anxious time.

This email is specific to new Junior Infants and their first days and weeks at school. A separate email will be sent to all parents shortly to outline the steps we will be taking as a whole school to implement the guidelines outlined in the 'COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools'.

### First Day Schedule

Under the current emergency health guidelines we have had to adapt our usual 'First Day' rituals and traditions. On a typical first day of school parents come into the infant classroom with their children but unfortunately we won't be able to accommodate that this year. However we think it's important for parents and children that we mark this occasion in some way and make new children and parents feel welcome in our school.

Please find a detailed account of your child's '**First Day of School Schedule**' at the end of this letter. I hope that it will go some ways to help families celebrate this day and ease any fears and anxieties parents and children may have (particularly under the current circumstances).

### Start Time

School starts at 9.15 am (apart from the very first day). Doors will open at 9.05. Infants are to enter through the main front door. Children are to line up using the distancing markers before entering the school. Parents will not be able to enter the school. A staff member will be at the door to help children find their way and maintain social distancing. Children will come directly to their classroom where their class teacher will be waiting. Children are to wash their hands last thing before leaving their home/childcare setting in morning. Children will sanitise their hands on entering the school and on entering their classrooms.

### Collection

For the first two weeks of Junior Infants the children will be collected at 12:20 to give them time to adjust to school. Collection time for Junior Infants will **12:20pm from Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> of September**. From **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> of September**, Junior Infants will be completing the full infant day and will be collected at **1:55pm**.



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At collection time, I will walk the children to the front door of the school and we will line up outside. Parents are asked to stay in their cars until all the children are outside. They may then approach to collect their children using the physical distancing markers on the ground as a guide. Parents are asked not to linger in the drop of/pick up area and return to their cars as soon as they have collected their child. Children going to afterschool can proceed straight down to Little Hands.

I will send home a form on the first day of school to find out what parent's drop off and collection arrangements are during a typical week (e.g. babysitters, carers, after school etc.)

Note: It is really important that parents/carers are there to collect the child at 12:20 during the first two weeks. If a parent or carer is late in the first few weeks it can cause anxiety for the child (e.g. that they have been forgotten about or other worrying thoughts).

### Books, Bags & Homework

On the first day the pupils will need to bring in their new books. These should be labelled on the front cover with the child's first name. Books will be kept in school so the children's bags will be light and easy to manage. Homework and homework folders won't be introduced until the end of September. I will explain how homework will be organised and completed closer to the time.

### Lunch

Children will need to bring a lunch and drink every day. The child should be able to open all lunch items independently (wrappers, fruit, drink bottles etc.) to reduce close teacher contact with children and food products. Children will have to bring in their own utensils (e.g. spoons for yogurts) as no sharing will be permitted. All rubbish will need to go home again in the child's lunch boxes to reduce pupil movement around the classroom during lunch.

### Clothing

Children are asked to bring outdoor clothing appropriate to the weather (e.g. sun cream, sun hat, waterproof coats with hoods etc.). Practical and weather appropriate clothing is very important as children will be spending much more time outside during the school day in accordance with department guidelines. All clothing should be labelled with the child's name.

While I understand that zippers etc. can be tricky, it would be helpful if children are able to put on and remove their outdoor clothing by themselves as it would reduce close contact between children and staff members. Do not worry overly if children are unable to do this just yet. All children develop these skills at their own pace. No child will be left behind and they will have help whenever they need it.



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Children should bring in an oversized old shirt or t-shirt to wear over their uniform during messy art and craft activities. This should be clearly labelled with their name and it will remain in school for the year.

#### Handwashing and Hygiene

Under the circumstances it would be very helpful if you teach your child good handwashing prior to attending school (see video- <https://youtu.be/EfQvLT0sKNc>). It would also be helpful to remind them of good coughing and sneezing etiquette and good toileting habits before entering school.

#### Personal items

Children will not need any pencils, rubbers, colours etc. in the infant room. These will be provided by the school and pupils will have their own set of stationary to avoid sharing of resources. Children should not bring in any toys or personal items from home.

Although this will all be a year a little different from others, I want to reassure you all that I will do my utmost to ensure that your children feel safe and secure at school and that they will have lots of fun playing, learning and making new friends. We will do our best to balance the new emergency healthy guidelines with the academic, physical, emotional, social and personal development of your child.

More information will follow with regard to our whole school response plan to COVID-19 but I hope for now this letter has made the first days and weeks of primary school a less uncertain prospect. Personally I'm really looking forward to getting back to school, meeting all our wonderful new pupils and parents and settling into a much needed routine! Please feel free to contact me by email if you have any concerns and I will do my best to address them,

All the best for now and looking forward to meeting you all soon,

Aoife Moran

Class Teacher, Junior and Senior Infants



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## **First Day of School Schedule**

### **Start time**

Children are to arrive at the school at **9:40am** for **the first day only**. 9.15am will be their start time after that (with school doors opening at 9.05am). The later start time on the first day will make entering school for the first time less overwhelming for the Junior Infants. It will also give me and the other staff more time and space to welcome children and parents into the school on this special day.

### **Entering the school**

Our new Junior Infants and their parents may line up and enter through the main door of the school while observing 2m physical distancing from other families (distance markers will be on the ground). Families may then continue into the GP room opposite the main school door.

### **Face Coverings**

Children are not expected to wear face coverings. We will be asking parents to put on a face covering before entering the school building.

### **Name Tag**

On entering the GP room, families can collect their child's name tag from a staff member.

### **Photos**

We will have set up a 'My First Day of School' backdrop for parents to take pictures of their children if they wish. A staff member will also take photos of the children on the school camera as we will use them in lessons and artwork later in the week.

### **Seating**

Families may then sit with their children in the chairs provided, while maintaining physical distancing from other families. When seated I will welcome you all to Cahergal N.S, introduce myself and explain to the children some of the fun activities we have planned for the day.

### **Buddies**

The children will then be introduced to their first day 'buddies' (personal soft toy provided by the school). Parents and children can name their buddy together. You can tell your child that it is their buddy's first day of school too and they will need to take special care of their buddy on their first day.

### **Saying goodbye**

At around 10:00am I will invite parents to say their goodbyes and that I'll look forward to seeing parents back very soon at 12.20pm. The children will then line up with their bags and their buddies. They will give a big wave and then head off with me to their classroom. I know



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that this can be an emotional time for parents and children. There may well be some tears that morning and over the following number of weeks. Particularly because so many children have been cared for in their own homes predominantly over the last six months and may be unused to a more structured school setting. It is all completely understandable and normal and the children will adjust to school life in no time.

### **Classroom activities**

10:00 - 10:25: Welcoming play.

10:25 - 10:35: Introduce lunch time routine and toileting routines. Children have their snacks and chat to their new friends at their table.

10:35 - 10:55: Yard time (Free play outside with in their own area and with their own class bubble)

10:55: Introduce correct handwashing procedure.

11:05: Icebreakers and getting to know you activities/Songs

11:30: Short fun maths lesson

11:50: First day of school colouring

12:00: Story

12:15: Getting ready for home.

As you can see the day will fly by. The children and parents won't feel it until home time!

### **Collection**

Collection time is **12:20pm**. I will walk the children to the front door of the school and we will line up outside. Parents are asked to stay in their cars until all the children are outside. They may then approach to collect their children using the physical distancing markers on the ground as a guide. Parents are asked not to linger in the drop of/pick up area and return to their cars as soon as they have collected their child.