



CPB Parents Association - School Bag Weight Guide

The topic of School Bag Weight is a concern for many parents. The PA has reviewed the latest information and advice from the Department of Education and other expert sources on this topic and has developed a brief guide for parents on how best to handle the School Bag Weight issue. Excessively heavy School Bags can lead to the following problems for school students:

- *Back Pain & Discomfort*
- *Posture problems*
- *Scoliosis*

10% Body Weight Guideline: *In order to avoid / prevent back problems which arise from carrying overweight school bags the guideline is that one should not carry more than 10% of one's body weight. Based on the average weight of the average child going to second level (40 – 60kgs) weight of bag should be 4-6 kgs*

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT SCHOOL BAG

Parents can have a significant impact on this issue by simply choosing the right school bag which distributes the bag weight evenly:

- *Buy the right bag with good wide straps which can be adjusted to suit the student.*
- *Where waist straps are available, they should be worn as the weight is transferred to the hips, rather than having all the weight on the shoulders.*
- *The backpack should have a few separate compartments to help with packing and the heaviest should be put near the child's back. If the heaviest items are put further away, this will throw the child's centre of balance and cause unnecessary back strain.*
- *In an ideal world choose a school bag with wheels and an adjustable length handle which can be easily pulled behind the student.*



2. CARRY THE BAG CORRECTLY

It has also been identified in studies that incorrectly carrying their bags is central to the problems children are experiencing. Such issues are caused by:

- *Carrying the bag with the straps at full length, thus carrying the weight too far from the core.*
- *Carrying the bag on one shoulder - Puts unequal weight on the developing spine. It is not just when your child is going to and from school but is **actually worse going from class to class** throughout the day as more time is spent carrying the bag throughout the day than coming and going to school!!!*

Recommendation: Wear the bag correctly on both shoulders at ALL TIMES with the straps pulled as tight as is comfortable.

3. BE ORGANISED

As soon as your child gets his/her timetable, sit down with them and plan with them which books are needed on which days and which books can be left in the lockers provided for each student by Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí. Work with your child to develop a School Bag Book Carrying timetable that reflects their subject timetable.

IN SUMMARY

- *Select the right School Bag*
- *Explain correct carrying method and reasons why to your child*
- *Help them to develop a School Bag Book Carrying schedule*

The above will help significantly in the prevention of back strain.



ADDITIONAL OPTIONS parents may wish to consider

Having carried out the above recommendations, parents may wish to consider the following additional options based on their individual needs:

1. Second Copies of Some Books

Working with their son/daughter parents can choose to identify some of the heavier books in the child's bag and may wish to purchase a second copy of those books. Copies can be purchased either new or second hand from former students, local booksellers, or online suppliers. The second copy can be kept at home and the other copy in the school locker thus eliminating the need to carry the heavier books.

Of note, Schooldays.ie have a Second Hand School Books for sale section on the web at <http://www.schooldays.ie/articles/second-hand-school-books>

2. Electronic Textbooks

A handful of parents have asked the PA about potentially using electronic textbooks options (e.g. iPad, Kindle etc). The PA has raised this matter with the School Management, and the position of the school is that having recently committed a large capital sum to the School Book Rental scheme the school is completely committed to that scheme for the next number of years. Therefore, the school is not in a position to fund the further capital sums which would be required to enable a school based scheme for electronic textbooks at this time.

Of course, individual parents may choose to purchase electronic textbooks for use at home thus saving the student carrying books to/from school. Having looked at this area briefly the PA recommends parents consider the following points:

- a. *Equipment Costs* – The outright purchase cost of a tablet computer (e.g. iPad, Nexus, Kindle) is significant and would sometimes cover the purchase of an entire new second set of books for a student. Many homes already have a tablet computer and so this may not be a consideration, however if a student is going to be using it every weekday evening for homework and revision, it may necessitate the purchase of additional equipment.
- b. *E-Book Rental Costs* – The rental costs of e-books currently appears relatively expensive, with parents sometimes having to pay an annual licence fee for



each book. This can add very considerably to the total cost, be sure you know what the total and ongoing e-book costs are before signing up.

- c. *E-Book Device Compatibility* – Before choosing your electronic textbook reading device (e.g. iPad, Nexus, Kindle etc) contact the publishers of the school books your child needs to ensure that there is a compatible e-book of their textbooks available for your device.
- d. *Eye Strain* – Many tablet computers (e.g. iPad, Nexus etc) and not always designed to be used for long periods of reading on screen. E-readers are specifically designed for long periods of reading on screen and so would seem more appropriate for school students. However, you need to be sure the specific books your child needs are available for your e-Reader type.

Without doubt electronic devices and textbooks have a big future in our education system but we are currently in the relatively early stages of the changeover process. In time, publishers, device manufacturers, the Department of Education, and individual Schools will need to work together to provide an integrated and cost effective e-book rental scheme for students and parents. Unfortunately, we are not at that stage yet.

FURTHER READING

The Department of Education have a comprehensive websites on the topic of school bag weight at the following address :

<http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Weight-of-School-Bags>

The Report of the Department of Education Working Group on Weight of School Bags is available at the following address:

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/des_report_of_weight_of_schoolbags.pdf

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