



# St. Peter's College Parents' Association

## School Bag Weight Guide- September 2014

The topic of School Bag Weight is a concern for many parents. We have reviewed the latest information and advice from the Department of Education and other expert sources on this topic and have 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

**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 a schoolbag 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 schoolbag 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.

### **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.

We have researched a number of school bags and the following 2 brands/ websites are definitely worth considering:

[www.airbac.ie](http://www.airbac.ie)

Ridge schoolbags – Available from Dunboyne Sports and Leisure

### **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. Work with your child to develop a School Bag Book Carrying timetable that reflects their subject timetable. Students should only carry books for 3 classes at a time in their school bag. To achieve this, students need to take time at their lockers before assembly, at morning break and at lunchtime. Bag hooks are also provided by the school so encourage your child to use them.

### **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. Purchasing some of the heavier books between groups of friends who live nearby could also be a less expensive option. Always ensure you have the correct **edition** of book, you can check this by look up book **isbn** (barcode at the back of book)

**Useful Information:** There are a number of websites that offer second hand school books including:

[nationalbookexchange.ie](http://nationalbookexchange.ie)

[Done.deal.ie](http://Done.deal.ie)

[Adverts.ie](http://Adverts.ie)

[Schooldays.ie](http://Schooldays.ie)

#### **2. Electronic Textbooks**

Some books are available as an e-book and you can purchase a licence for these from book suppliers. These are available in 1 year and 3 year options. This may be an option instead of a 2<sup>nd</sup> set of books if a compatible device is available at home. Parents may choose to purchase electronic textbooks for homework thus saving the student carrying books to/from school. The following points should be taken into consideration:

**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.

**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.

**Eye Strain** – Many tablet computers (e.g. iPad, Nexus etc) are 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.

## **FURTHER READING/ INFORMATION**

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

<http://www.iscp.ie>- Further information on back care etc. is available under “Your Health”

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the next couple of years school books will be replaced with some form of e-reader. However for the moment as students continue to use textbooks it is important that we try and alleviate some of the problems that students experience as a result of heavy school bags.

We welcome any further suggestions/tips that you may have. Please contact us at [stpeterscollegepa@gmail.com](mailto:stpeterscollegepa@gmail.com). Thanks.