

Cárta and Birthday Parties (Primary School Age)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many parents would be interested in any means of reducing the repeated expenditure that seems to be part of birthday celebrations in Primary Schools. However, as with other areas, it is difficult to be the first to try and break the mould.

If interested bodies lent support to a voluntary scheme such as *Cárta*, it might well find favour and acceptance. The following procedure is suggested as one possible methodology for anyone wishing to participate:

- Send your invitations bearing the *Cárta* logo and with a print-off of the *Cárta* principles and a note explaining that you wish to run the party along those lines.
- Being a birthday party, it is unrealistic to expect any child to forego completely any present. For this reason, it is suggested that you include a request (or just print this sheet also and include it) that the present be in the form of an agreed *small sum* of money (not more than €5 is suggested, in accordance with the aim of keeping finance to a minimum).
- The parent then pools these contributions and buys one worthwhile present afterwards.
- Understandably, people such as family members or close friends may still wish to give their own special present, and this is at the discretion of those involved. It might be advisable for this to be done separately from the party.

Cárta also encourages parents to see a birthday party as a good opportunity to practise those elements of good manners that are important to any party host or guest:

- the host welcomes all of his/her guests
- the guests wish the host a happy birthday and give their *Cárta* present
- the host thanks them and brings them in to the party
- during the event the host plays some part in looking after the guests and seeing that they are included
- the guest thanks the host (and parents!) when leaving and the host sees them off and thanks them for coming

These are simple things, but they can become lost in the heightened atmosphere of a party! Good social training will always stand to a child, and it plays a major part in how they are seen by others in the future, as well as how they act in adulthood.

Thanks to the Principal and Staff of Ballinora NS for kindly hosting the *Cárta* documents on the school's website at www.ballinorans.ie