

AMBITIONS FOR TRANSITIONS:

A Guide to Support
Every Child's Progression from

Early Years Services
to
Primary School



Early Year Centres and Primary Schools involved in the programme:

Corpus Christi Preschool
Distillery View Preschool & Montessori
Limerick Social Services Early Years Centre
Little Seeds Childcare
Northside Family Resource Centre - King's Island Creche
Northside Family Resource Centre - Sunshine Childcare Centre
Presentation Preschool
Scoil na nÓg - Preschool
St Mary's Preschool

Corpus Christi Primary School
Our Lady Queen of Peace National School
Presentation Primary School
St Mary's National School
St Michael's Infants School
St. John's Girls and Infant Boys School (Scoil Eoin Naofa)
Thomond Primary School

Members of the Interagency Working Group:

Aileen Kelleher	ABC Start Right
Anne Delaney	Limerick Childcare Committee
Emer Ring	Mary Immaculate College (MIC)
Hilary Pratt	Thomond Primary School
Jean Currid	Barnardos
Kate Russell	Our Lady Queen of Peace National School
Laura Keane	Barnardos
Linda O'Donnell	Limerick Social Services Early Years Centre
Máire O'Sullivan	Presentation Primary School
Margaret Kelly	Thomond Primary School
Maria O'Dwyer	ABC Start Right
Maria Tobin	Tusla
Marie Doherty	Dept. of Education & Skills
Maura Bourke	Dept. of Education & Skills
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Foreword

Introduction 3



Family Resource Pack 14



Early Years Practitioner
Resource Pack 22



Primary School
Resource Pack 30

References 42

Appendices 47



Contents

Glossary

What we say

What that means

Early Years

Early childhood the period from birth until the age of 5 or 6 years (up to, and including, the infant classes in primary school)

Early Years Practitioner (EYP)

The childcare professional who nurtures and supports your child's learning and development

Early Years Services (EYS)

The place your child attends for early childhood care and education. This includes childminders, crèches and preschools

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

A teacher who has a particular role within the school. (S)he encourages, supports and facilitates partnership between parents and teachers in the education of their children

Parent

Moms, Dads and all others who play a parenting role for a child (carers, foster parents, grandparents etc.)

Transition

A move from one stage to another (in this case, from being a preschooler to being a pupil in primary school)

Foreword

Moving to primary school is an important part of every child's life and the publication, *Ambitions for Transitions: A Guide to Support Every Child's Progression from Early Years Services to Primary School*, is an important resource for parents and all those working in this area of transition. It is of particular relevance for those working in disadvantaged communities in Ireland. The Area Based Childhood site, ABC Start Right in Limerick, works collaboratively with families, preschools, primary schools and local agencies to develop supports for children as they transfer from preschool to primary school. The project identifies ways to encourage and support the kinds of communication and collaboration necessary for a comprehensive transition programme.

Following on from this, they developed this useful publication divided into three parts for

1. Families
2. Early years practitioners
3. Teachers of junior infant classes.

Each part provides practical suggestions along with a useful calendar to prompt all involved to support transitions at the appropriate time. Importantly, both the initial transition programme and the publication acknowledge the value of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)* noting it is a key resource for both early years practitioners and teachers as children make this important step on their educational journey from preschool to primary school.

The transition from preschool to primary school is also an area of NCCA's work at present as we develop national reporting templates¹ for sharing information about children's learning and development as they finish preschool and begin primary school. These templates will be available online from Autumn 2018 and will be an important part, though only one part, of the enhancement of transition experiences for children in Ireland as they move from preschool to primary school. As preparation for developing the templates, the NCCA published three research reports about the transition to primary school (www.ncca.ie). The key messages from these reports underpin both the NCCA's work on transition and the ABC Start Right work.

This ABC Start Right project in Limerick and similar projects around the country are laying important groundwork in advance of the publication of the reporting templates for sharing information about children's learning and development as they move from preschool to primary school. This work very much complements that of the NCCA in the area of transitions, and as such, we are delighted to provide the foreword to the publication, *Ambitions for Transitions: A Guide to Support Every Child's Progression from Early Years Services to Primary School*.



Mary Daly

Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

¹ This work is included in Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and for Life: The National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 (DES, 2011).



‘You’re off to great
places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is
waiting, so...
Get on your way’

(Dr. Seuss)

Introduction

‘School readiness’

is a common term that has different meanings for different people. For some, it is checklist of things that a young child ‘should’ be able to do before they start primary school.

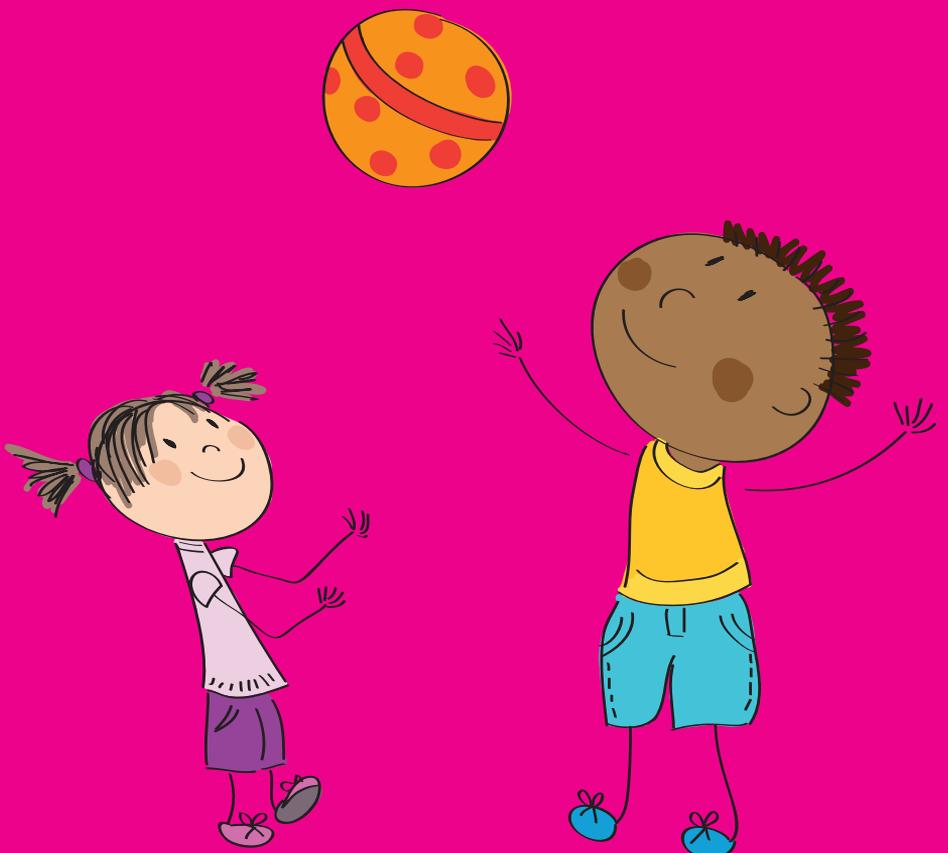
For others, a child’s ability to make friends and have a positive attitude to learning is used as a marker. The only thing for certain is that a definition of school readiness is hard to agree on!

This guide doesn’t try to explain or define what ‘school ready’ looks like. Instead, it looks at how we – as parents, Early Years practitioners and teachers – support children to become ready for school.

We know that this preparation begins at birth, when babies develop social and emotional skills, knowledge and resilience necessary for success in school and life. We also know that everyday experiences shape early learning and that play promotes a love for learning.

What is certain is the importance of **YOUR** role in enabling each individual child to make a planned and supported transition from their Early Years Service (EYS) to primary school. You are the bridge builder - this guide provides you with some practical tips, ideas and resources to do just that.

It isn’t a definitive ‘to do’ list and it isn’t a manual. It is something that you can dip in and out of, when and where you feel guidance is useful.



A giant

thank you to all the
junior infant class children of
St. Mary's National School,
Presentation Primary School &
Thomond Primary School in
Limerick

whose AWESOME pictures
fill these pages and whose
input taught us so much.



Why...

...the transition
from Early Years
services to
primary school
is so important



Moving from an EYS to school is, literally, a giant leap for young children. The transition marks a change in the way children participate in both their family and community. Children will make many transitions during their lives, and supporting them at this important milestone will have long-term benefits.

Some children start primary school with enthusiasm and confidence; others find this transition stressful and difficult.

Research suggests that approximately one-third of children experience some difficulties as they transition to primary school. These issues can have negative social and academic implications. It is vital, therefore, to give children positive experiences from the beginning. When transitions work well they help children to develop confidence and acquire skills to manage future changes in their lives. Planned activities that address the differences children and families will experience are key to a quality transition process.



The Irish Context

In many countries children do not start their primary education before the age of six. However, in Ireland nearly **40% of 4-year-olds** and **almost all 5-year-olds attend primary school**. As a result, there are differences in both the age ranges and developmental stages in Junior Infant classes.

An additional issue is that **EYS and schools are usually completely separate entities** and often have little or no overlap or communication regarding the children transferring from one to the other. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment are developing national reporting templates to share information about children's learning and development between parents, preschools and primary schools.

www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood (21st December 2017)

Commitment to a Play-Based Approach

Our approach to developing a comprehensive transition programme has been influenced by our commitment to the importance of play for children's learning and development in the Early Years. This commitment is grounded in national and international research that highlights the significant contribution of play to children's lives. The value of play for young children in EYS and the infant classes of primary school is not always recognised. **It is important to remind ourselves that children learn and develop best through play.** Aistear the National Curriculum Framework used in EYS and schools places strong emphasis on play. Young children continue to experience 'schoolification' in their earliest years but it isn't developmentally appropriate for children to be expected to master at academic aspects of learning such as knowing letters and numbers at this age.

Providing space and opportunities for children to play supports and enhances their emotional, social, cognitive, physical and academic development.

Children with additional needs also benefit enormously from being provided with play opportunities right from the start. The critical importance of play for children's learning is specifically acknowledged in Early-Years-Education-Focused Inspections (Department of Education and Skills). **During play, children generate highly imaginative and spontaneous scenarios, which contribute to language development, self-regulation, symbolic thinking and emotional well-being.**

Play is necessary for cognitive, social-emotional, physical, positive mental health development and for success in school and beyond.

“Let Me Play!”

What a child would want you to know:

“My favourite thing to do is to play! I am happiest when I am playing on my own or with my friends. When I am playing, I can freely choose the activity I like best. I can pretend to be anything I want to be. When I get a chance to play with my friends, we can work out our own rules for the games we play, we don’t have to keep to adults’ rules! We can talk about what we are playing, we don’t have to be quiet but we can be quiet if we are trying to figure something out too!”

“My friends and I like it too when sometimes our parents or teachers are interested in, join in with us and talk to us about our play. But please we do need time to play ourselves also! We don’t need to have expensive toys to play. Our favourite things to play with are empty cardboard boxes; shells; sand; water; bricks and a dressing-up corner with clothes that no one wants anymore. We like to play outside too. Last week we made a den with an old blanket and some sticks so we could go camping.”

“I would like more time to play and not have to sit down so much and write my letters and numbers all the time. I like to make my own marks on paper with lots of different pencils, crayons and markers, when we play Post Office and shop. I know that I will be a good writer like my teacher one day but for now I just want to play!”

How did this Transitions Guide come about?

A child's growth and development is supported by a range of people, with their parent(s) playing the leading role. While everybody does their best, we often tend to just focus on 'our bit'. However, working together and communicating effectively is one of the best protective factors we can provide for children. So, in Limerick, when it came to thinking about how the transition from EYS to primary school could be supported more consistently, partnership working was the most obvious way forward.

The ABC Start Right programme in Limerick City is part of the National Area Based Childhood Programme. It is a prevention and early intervention initiative that works in partnership with families, local services and agencies. All of this work is done to improve child outcomes.

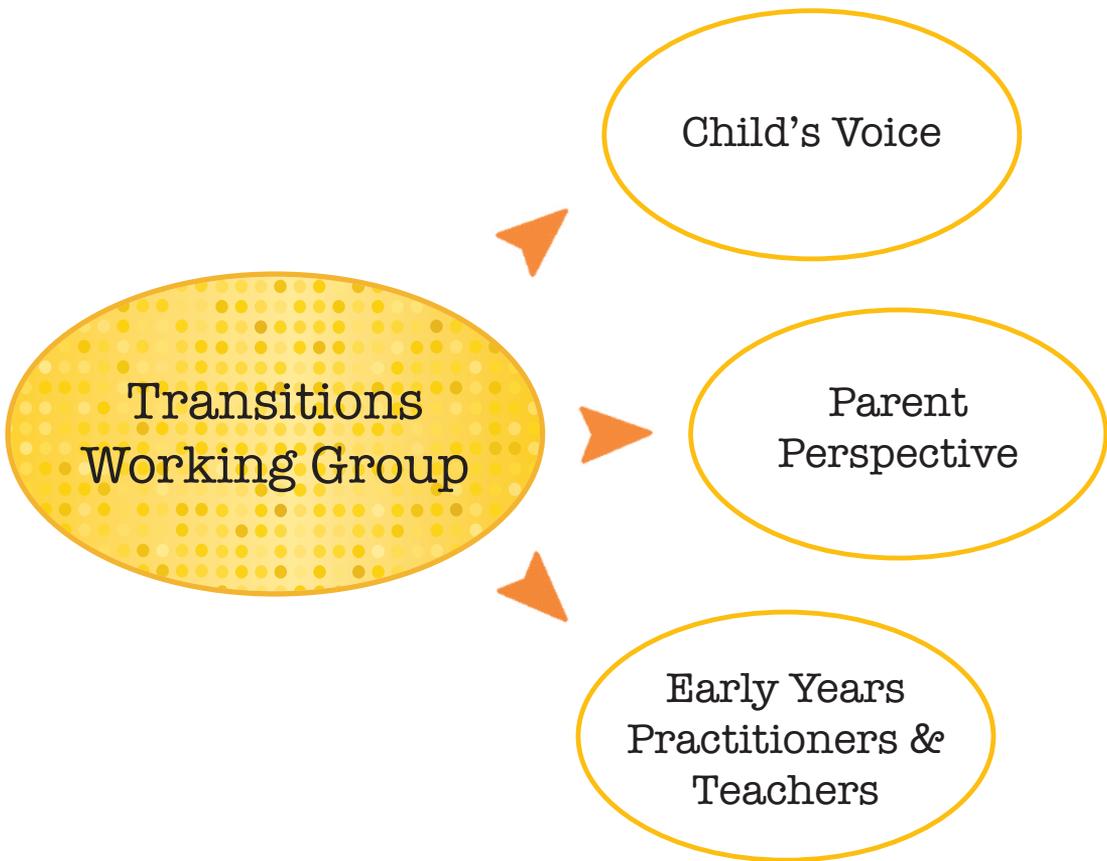
Led by ABC Start Right, a Transitions Group was established to focus on how best to support children and families during this pivotal time. An interagency approach was adopted with representatives from Tusla, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Limerick Childcare Committee, Mary Immaculate College, Incredible Years Limerick, Barnardos, Limerick Social Services, six local DEIS primary schools and nine Early Years settings in the project area.

Three working groups were set up, each focusing on transitions as related to their particular area of interest:

Parent's Perspective, Child's Voice & Early Years Practitioners and Teachers

Each reported back to the main Transitions Working Group. In line with international best practice **the transition to school is regarded as a process, not an event**. For this reason, the Transitions Group was tasked with developing a process that supports children with the move to school all the way from the year before school starts and throughout the first term of junior infants.





As charted in the ABC Start Right Transitions Programme timeline, this has been a long and dedicated process of listening, developing and piloting. Detailed feedback-gathering activities were a core part of every step in the process. The collaborative involvement of children, parents, EYPs, Home School Community Liaisons and teachers has been essential to the successful development of effective resources.

In striving to identify effective ways to smooth the move to school, there has been particular focus on:

1

Identifying ways to encourage and support the kind of communication and collaboration necessary for a comprehensive transition programme.

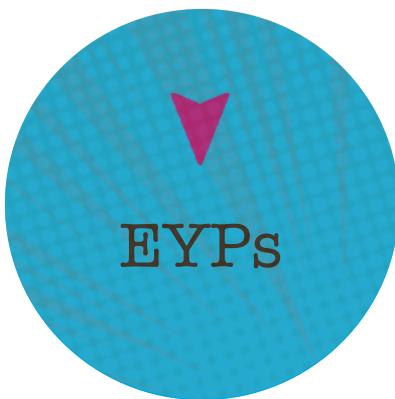
2

Developing and disseminating resources on the kind of play-based activities that support children and their families throughout the transition period.

3

Empowering families to support their child throughout the transition period.

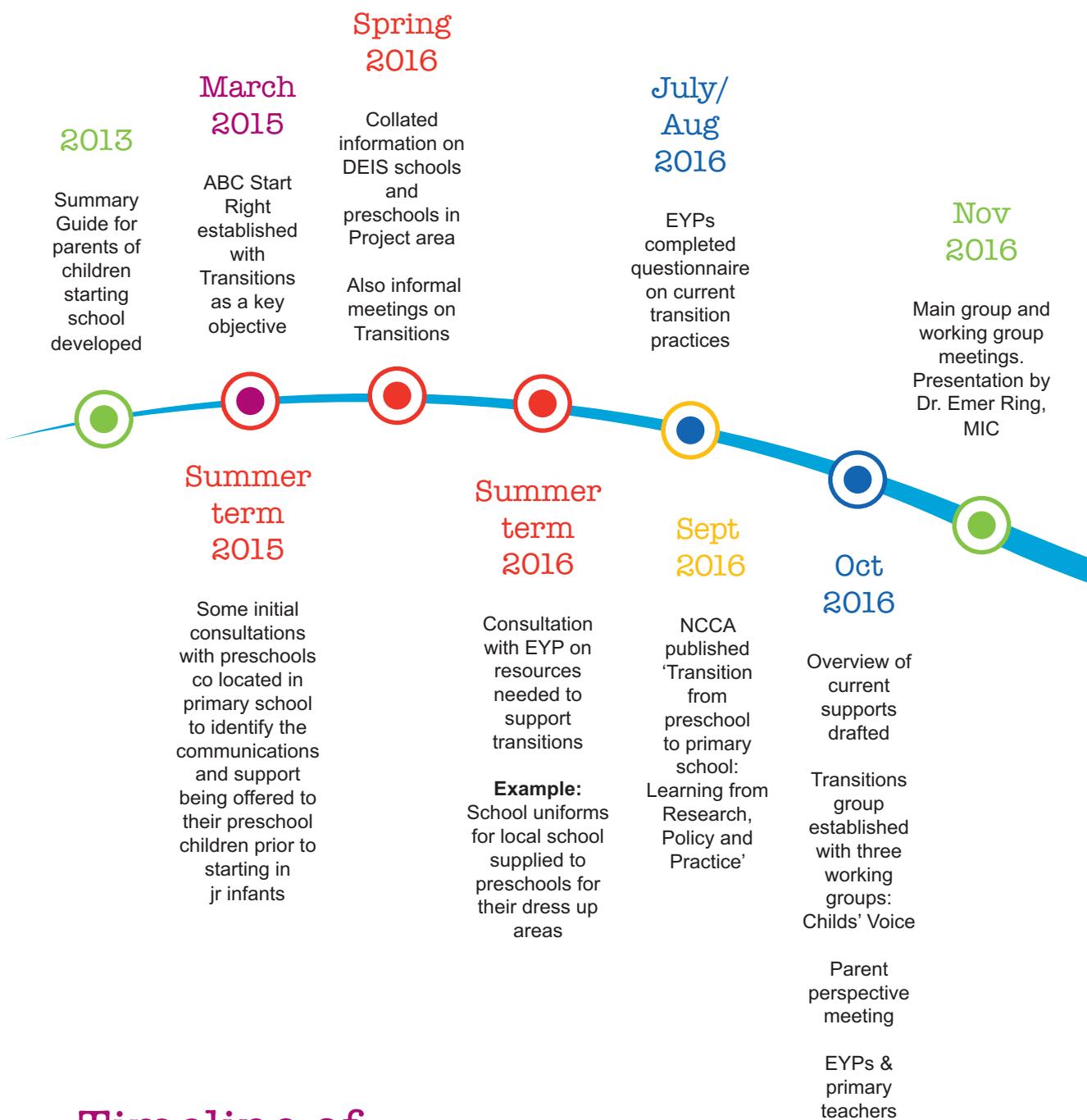
Throughout this process a significant amount of valuable learning has been acquired. In this guide, we strive to bring that knowledge together in an ordered and accessible way so others can learn from it. To this end we have developed three separate but inter-linked resource packs, colour - coded as follows.



Each pack has been designed to act as a bank of information that can be disseminated in part or as a whole. They each contain advice, tips and a compact calendar. These calendars provide a quick and easy reminder of what could be done and when to do it. In addition, templates, examples and links to additional resources have been included.

The contents of these packs are not prescriptive and the intention is not in any way to place restrictive demands on anybody. The purpose of the pack is to make it easier for practitioners and parents to incorporate transition-supporting activities into their everyday practice and routines. The resources and tips are intended to reduce the workload involved by connecting each group to useful tools. We very much hope that each pack will simplify the process of supporting young children to experience a positive transition to school.





Timeline of ABC Start Right Transitions Programme....

abc STORY RIGHT LIMERICK




Family

Resource Pack



As a parent you play the LEADING role in helping to prepare your child for school.

As the people who know, love and care for your child in a way that nobody else can, you are their biggest security blanket. You can help them to feel more confident and enthusiastic about the changes ahead.

Starting school is not just about the first day in September. It's a process that begins from your child's very first days. From birth, they are ready to learn. They know that you will meet their needs and comfort them when they cry. Their little brains are growing and every interaction and emotion your baby experiences helps that growth. Everyday, you are helping to build the strong foundations for their future.

Think about the changes (or what we call the 'transitions') that you have supported your child through so far. You saw them transform from crawler to walker as they took their first steps. You talked them through the move from cot to bed. You hugged and reassured them through the transition from being with you all of the time, to being cared for by somebody else - whether a minder, crèche or preschool. Naturally then, when it comes to preparing for school, you are your child's best source of support and reassurance.

In addition to your own instincts and experiences, there are many things that you can do to support the transition to primary school. This booklet provides a range of useful tips and activity ideas, as well as a calendar, to guide you through the process. The resources have been carefully developed from discussions with children, parents, Early Years practitioners and primary school teachers in your local community.

As you can see, we're big believers that it takes a village to raise a child!

Young children learn and develop best through play. This guide is full of ideas for play-based activities you can do with your child to help them with the move to school. At every stage of the process, there are many ways you can plan and prepare for the new challenges ahead.

The guide begins with some tips on choosing a primary school. It then provides some fun play-based activities you can do with your child to help prepare them to attend school. It finishes with tips on useful things to do once school starts. The calendar provides a quick and easy-to-follow reminder of what to do and when to do it.

Remember that you know your child best. Some children feel most confident with a lot of preparation whereas, for others, too much may be overwhelming.

Simply do what you always do - what works best for YOUR child.

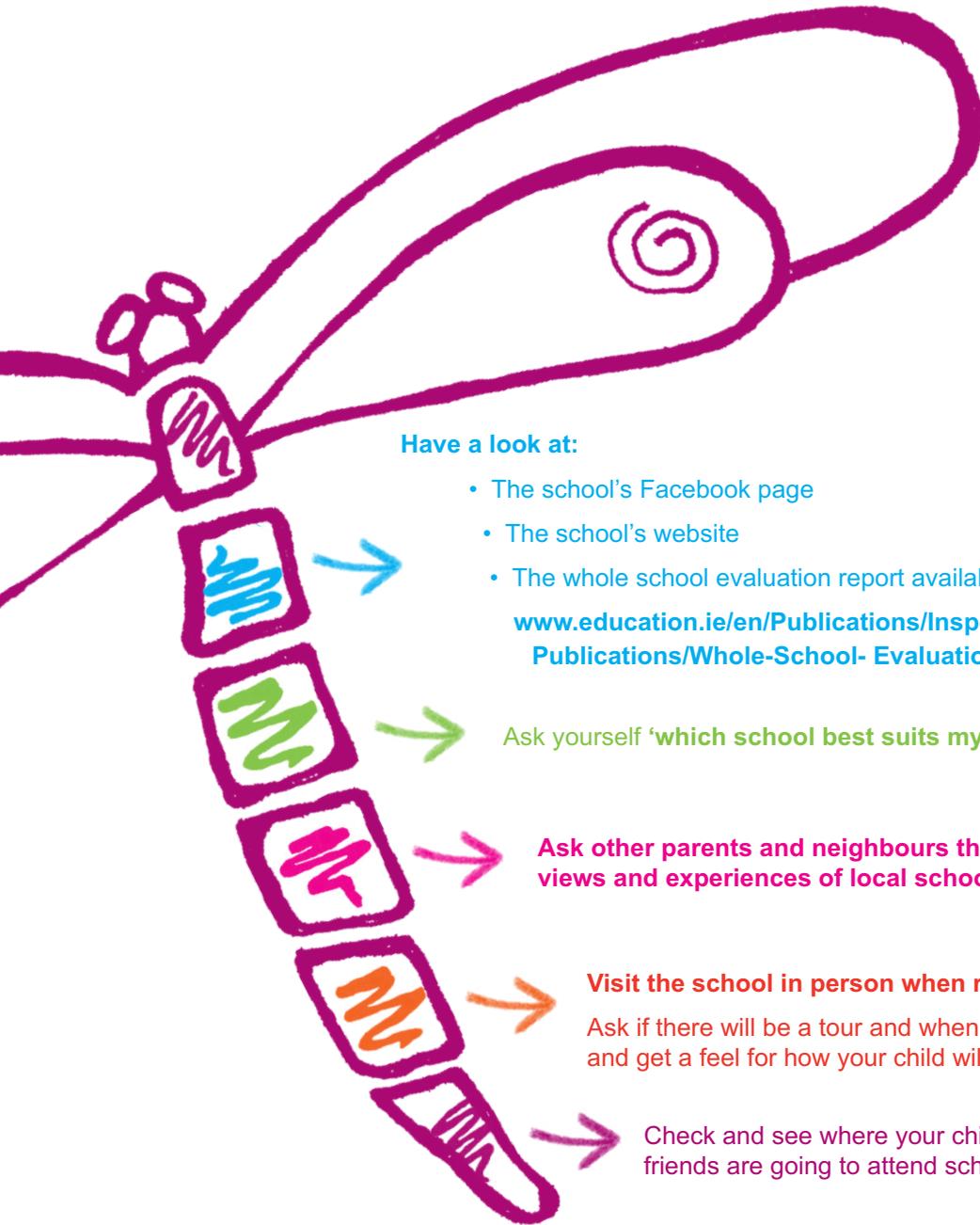
Resource Tool: Helping your child to be ready for school

Page: 70



step 1

Tips on choosing a primary school



Have a look at:

- The school's Facebook page
- The school's website
- The whole school evaluation report available

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/

Ask yourself **'which school best suits my child's needs?'**

Ask other parents and neighbours their views and experiences of local schools.

Visit the school in person when registering your child.
Ask if there will be a tour and when; Absorb the atmosphere and get a feel for how your child will fit in.

Check and see where your child's friends are going to attend school.

step 2

Preparing to attend school

There are many ways you can help your child become familiar with their new setting and what will be expected of them at school. Have a chat with the preschool staff or other carers and ask their opinion on how they feel your child will transition into primary school. If you have any concerns or worries about your child the preschool can access extra support through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Programme while in preschool:

www.aim.gov.ie/for-parents/

They have extensive experience and should be able to give you some concrete advice. They also know your child's likes, dislikes and little routines.

There are three key areas where doing a bit of preparation with your child can be very useful:

1. Fostering independence
2. Getting to know the school
3. Getting to know the school day routine

1. Fostering independence

It is important to encourage your child to do small jobs and chores for themselves. We call these 'self care' skills. There are four main types of these skills:

- Self-feeding
- Independent dressing
- Toileting
- Keeping track of their own items.

You can start developing these skills in a fun, play-based way and slowly build up your child's skills and confidence over time. When the time comes that you are picking out things your child will use at school, be sure to consider your child's skill level. For example: Velcro or strap shoes, zipped pencil cases and easy open and close lunch boxes.

Resource Tool: Helping your child to be ready for school

Page: 70



Play games where your child packs and unpacks the school bag they will be using. Make it fun by making up a rhyme about it or singing a song. Something as simple as 'open up, in it goes. Use the zip, it's time to close' can work wonders!

Help your child to practice serving themselves lunch and helping with the clean up. For example, you may like to set up a pretend picnic in the backyard or park.

Play games where people have to raise their hand to say something and wait for their turn to participate. All members of the family could practise it over dinner as they talk about their day.

When using public toilets, explain that there are separate toilets for girls and boys, just like there will be in school.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF FUN ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO PREPARE FOR STARTING SCHOOL

Tell positive stories about your time in school. Children love to hear stories about your school days. Try to focus on the positive and be optimistic. For example, talk about your favourite teacher, things you had fun doing or great friends you made.

When you label their belongings show them to your child so they can recognise the labels and easily identify what belongs to them.

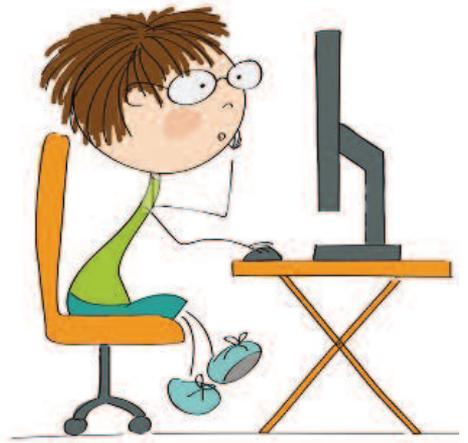
Not all children can recognise their name before they start school and that's absolutely fine.

Role play self-care tasks such as eating or dressing with teddy bears. Doing it on others will help your child to learn. 'Oh look, teddy needs to get ready. Let's help him button his cardigan and put on his shoes.'

Take opportunities as they arise to sing rhymes and read stories together.

Tidy up toys and books when finished with them. This helps your child to understand that another activity begins after the previous one is finished and tidied away.

Remember that working on these skills doesn't stop on the first day of school. **We know developmentally that children develop these skills at different stages** and can sometimes forget some skills that we know they have. They are easily distracted by the newness of school so try to give them space to adjust. Children develop these skills in partnership with caring adults and they still need support, even when we think they have mastered them. For example, children are still only grasping how to share and take turns up to the age of seven.



2. Get to know the school

Try to attend as many information sessions and open days as possible. Bring your child with you so they get opportunities to spend time in the school. If you have any questions, write them down. This often makes them easier to ask.

Link with other children or friends or relatives already attending the school. This helps you to gather further information, and will provide a familiar face for your child when they start.

Take opportunities to give the school as much information as possible about your child.

3. Prepare for the school day routine

You can also help your child to get to know the school day routine. Getting used to changes in your daily routine can help build a child's sense of security and reduce stress.

Try out the following routines in the weeks leading up to starting school:



Set a **regular bedtime routine** that will allow your child to wake up fresh and ready for the day.



Practise the **morning routine** of getting up early, putting on your child's uniform and packing their school bag.



Walk or drive past the school so your child will become **familiar with the route** and the area.

Try going at the usual school drop-off and pick-up times as this will help you and your child get to know what to expect (e.g. how busy the traffic will be, which route to take etc.).

step 3

Once School Starts

First Day Tips



Have school bag, clothes, water bottles and anything else needed in the morning ready the night before.



Eat a good breakfast together. Try not to rush but instead, sit together and chat about the day ahead.



Try and give yourself an extra few minutes so you arrive in the school yard or classroom before the bell rings. This will give your child time to adjust to the activity of the yard or classroom while you are there as a support. Likewise, make sure that you are there to collect on time everyday so your child is secure in the knowledge that you will be there and that you won't forget them or be late.



If you are finding it hard to get information about your child's day in school try asking a specific question. Instead of 'how was your day', maybe ask 'were you sitting beside James again today?' 'Have you had a chance to use your new crayons yet?' These tend to be easier to answer than general questions and don't put your child under pressure to remember everything that happened.

Tips on settling in to school life

Stay in contact with the school. Try to attend anything you are invited to in the school or send someone in your place, such as Little Voices sessions, 'book start', transitions meeting etc.

If there are significant events happening at home, these will have an impact on your child. Children are very sensitive to the anxieties and stresses that happen in every home from time to time. It could be as major as a family bereavement or house move, or as small as a new family pet. If it's a big talking point with your child, it's worth letting teachers know what's happening. This will give them the information they need to be able to support your child through any of life's changes.

Parent's calendar

MON TUES WED THURS FRI SAT SUN

Term One: September to December

- Ask EYPs if they feel your child has any specific needs that you need to factor in when planning for their primary school education.
- Consider your options when selecting your child's primary school.
- Register your child in primary school of your choice if you have not already done so.

Term Two: January to Easter

- Practise simple self-care skills, toileting, washing hands, blowing nose etc.
- Meet EYPs to discuss your child's move to primary school.

Term Three: Easter to June

- Get to know the school.
- Attend school Open/Information days.
- Talk to your child and discuss any concerns, hopes, and ideas they have about school.

Over the Summer Holidays

- Talk positively about school.
- Establish simple routines that will help when school starts, such as brushing teeth, putting on coat etc.
- Write your child's name on school bag, books, coat, uniform etc.
- Consider your child's skill level when getting items for school.
Will they be able to open their bag and pencil case by themselves?
Can they put on and take off their own shoes?

First Year in Primary School

Term One September - October

- Drop off and collect your child on time.
- Give your child time to wind-down after school before asking them questions.
- Talk to the teacher about any questions or concerns as they arise.
- Inform your child's teacher of life-events that may impact on your child, such as the arrival of a new baby, a separation, etc.

Early Years Practitioner

Resource Pack



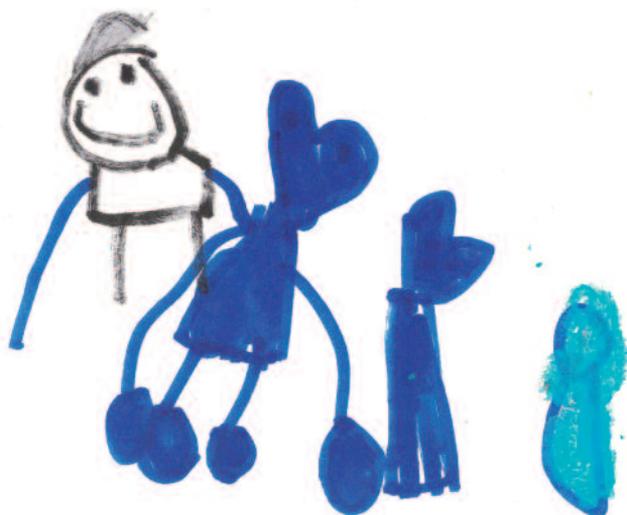
Early Year Practitioners (EYPs) make a significant contribution to preparing young children for school. Many children see starting school as a positive and exciting change but many others experience starting school as an unsettling time. Research shows that the first experience children have of school has a great impact on their progress and future schooling. As an EYP you can play a key role in supporting the child and family to be more familiar with the upcoming transition. In doing so, you are helping each child to feel secure, confident and able to tackle the changes ahead.

Supporting the transition of children to primary school needs to be considered as a process and not a one-off event. Great progress has been made within the Early Years sector in generating innovative activities that give children the opportunity to process their response to transitioning to school. This pack is designed to help in the continuous development of this process by making it easier for practitioners with high demands on their time to engage in transition-supporting activities.

There are many people involved with the child as they start school and lots of information that needs to be shared. For this reason, the success of the transition programme depends largely on communication and collaboration between all people involved in the process. This pack includes examples of the kind of things you can do to support and facilitate effective communication by giving children and families opportunities to become familiar with new routines and people.

As you know, young children learn and develop best through play. Accordingly, the pack is full of ideas for play-based activities you can do with children to help them with the move to school. It provides a range of useful tips and activity ideas as well as an easy-to-follow calendar to guide you through the process. The calendar provides a quick reminder of what to do and when to do it. The resources in this pack have been carefully developed from discussions with children, parents, EYPs and primary school teachers in your local community.

All these tips or practices are just suggestions. If they can't or don't work for your service, that's fine. After all, the ability to adapt and tweak practice to meet changing needs is one of the core skills in the EYP's box of tools!



step 1

Work on developing a clear Transition Policy

- 1 Meet as a staff team to talk about your Transition Policy.
- 2 You might even consider if it would be useful to identify a Transition Coordinator from within your team to liaise with local school(s).
- 3 It is good practice for EYPs to have a Transition Policy that can be agreed and shared with feeder schools.
- 4 A key objective of any transition programme should be to support the child and family to feel more at ease in the school environment, so they can feel more confident and enthusiastic about the changes ahead.

step 2

Supporting every child's transition through effective communication & partnership

Lots of people are involved with a child as they start school and important information needs to be shared. This should involve a co-ordinated process between EYPs and the school. If schools and EYPs have good links then the preschool can support the parents before the child starts school by signposting to appropriate support and guidance. It also helps families to demystify the whole transition process, because they know what to expect.

Parents play a key role in supporting their child to feel comfortable with the transition process. It is important that children and parents are given opportunities to familiarise themselves with the school environment so they can start building relationships with the key members of staff. Parents and carers need to have clear information about what will be happening and what their role in the process will be.

Resource Tool: Tip for developing an effective Transitions Policy
Page: 57

What is the aim of the policy?	Facilitate planning and management of transitions, consistency of key information, factors which will enhance settings and their management of parents to ensure continuity of experiences for children (Early Development CD)
What do the children need from the policy?	Consistent and consistent key information, predictable and reliable responses to support each child's sense of time, security and stability
What do practitioners need from the policy?	Children need consistent key information, identify planned opportunities to do school activities and experiences to help ease any anxiety they may have leading to change
What do parents/carers need from the policy?	Parents need to have their involvement in easing transitions for their child enhanced and supported. They need frequent opportunities for sharing information and gain reassurance from staff and the opportunity to have open responses for their child
What do the Early Years Practitioners and School staff need from the policy?	Staff/practitioners need to ensure that parents are aware of the need to be involved with them in easing transitions for their children. They need to ensure that frequent communication with parents is maintained and that they are aware of their role in supporting both practitioners and staff.
What does management need from the policy?	Management need to ensure that suitable care and attention is given to planning and ensuring smooth transitions and that staff are supported accordingly in their roles.

Tips on fostering introductions between the school and the child

- Arrange meetings with primary school staff.

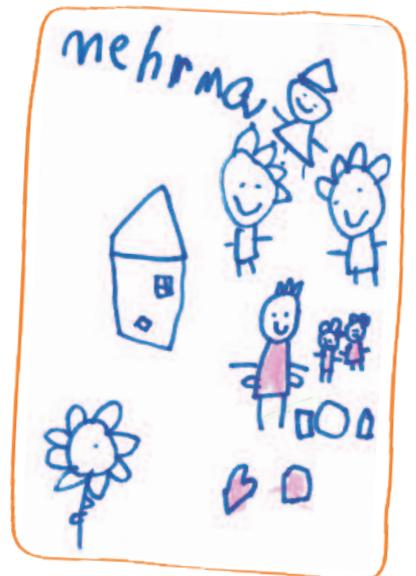
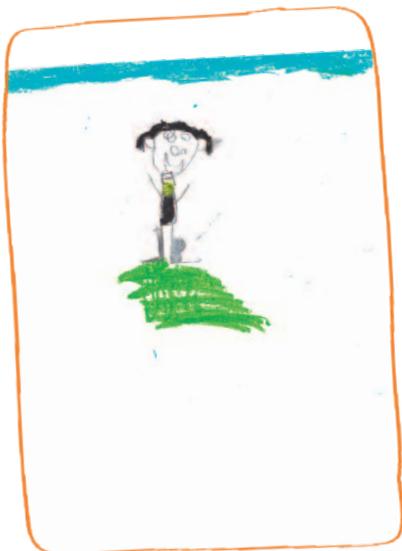
Your preschool may have an existing relationship with your local primary school(s) but this is not always the case.

If this is the first time you have approached a local primary school it is best to do so formally, through the school Principal. They can then introduce you to the junior infant teacher(s) and you can both structure future communications between the school and the preschool.

While some preschools feed into one primary school, others may feed into multiple schools. This can make the task of building relationships bigger.

In such cases, you might choose to focus building relationships with the main primary schools your children are feeding into and, where you can, make contact with other schools.

- Follow up earlier connections with the local primary school by inviting staff to any end-of-year events you are organising such as family days, graduations, school concerts and sports days.
- Discuss with the local school the kinds of information they would like you to share with them. There are various templates available nationally and the NCCA is currently piloting a national information transfer sheet.
- As schools provide you with times and dates of their open days, make them available to your parents. Encourage families to bring their children to these events and maybe discuss with them questions they would like to bring.



Tips on empowering families to support their child's transition

- Arrange meetings with families to discuss preparing for the transition to school or any other queries around starting school.

In the resources below we have given examples of the kinds of skills children generally develop to assist them in their transition to school.

However, when discussing 'school readiness' with parents and children we shouldn't be stating that they are not ready for school if they can't do everything on these lists.

If used like that these lists can put too much pressure on children and give the wrong message to anxious parents.

We know developmentally that children develop these skills at different stages and can even regress or forget to carry through on some of these for various reasons, such as being distracted by something else.

Children develop these skills in partnership with caring adults and they still need support, even when we think they have mastered them.

- If the children in your service go to a number of different primary schools, parents are often unsure of which school other children are planning to attend. By putting a list of local schools on your door parents can choose to fill in their information for other parents to see. This gives the parents the names of other children who will be in their child's school in September. This can reassure children that there will be a familiar face at school next year.
- There are lots of useful resources that have been developed by various support agencies. Familiarising yourself with this information, and knowing where to access it, can reduce the amount of work needed to develop resources. You don't need to reinvent what's already done - simply build on it.

Child's Name	School's Name	Parent's Name	Contact Details (optional)
Samuel	St. Michael's Primary	Paul	016 222222
Lucy Lee	St. Mary's	James	016 333333
Agathee Joseph	St. Patrick's girls	Thomas' Abbot	01644343434

.....

Resource Tool:
Sample of this kind of list
Page: 49



.....

Resource Tool:
Sample of some examples of Resources available
Page: 61



.....

Resource Tool:
Helping your child to be ready for school
Page: 70

step 3

Building every child's skills & confidence

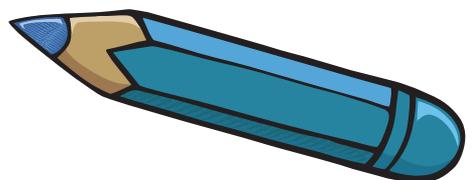
Planned transition activities that address the differences children will experience at school are central to a quality transition process.

Transition activities give children opportunities to discover all about their future school and become familiar with new routines and people.

Every child is unique so it is also important to listen to children by doing various activities that create space for them to articulate the ways they are feeling about the transition to school.

If concerns or worries emerge during these targeted activities the EYPs can take steps to address these on an individual basis with the child.

It is important to give children an opportunity to reflect on their transition to school and to ask the questions that are important to them.



.....
Resource Tool:
Helping your child to be ready for school
Page: 70

Ideas for play-based activities that support the transition to primary school



Put books about starting school in the library for individual or group reading. These can provide numerous talking points for discussions.

.....



Introduce school-related props into your setting to support school discussions and play:

- Have local school uniforms in the dress-up box
 - Incorporate school bags and lunch boxes into play.
-



You can use a puppet to talk about how they are feeling about starting school or they can be used to explain some of the practicalities of going to school. This might include what the school bell means or how to cross the road with the school's lollypop person.

.....



Activities such as 'growing flowers from seed' can be used to represent transitions and open a space to talk about change.

.....



Facilitate small group and large group discussions. Listen to children's thoughts and if they have any concerns, address them. As the term progresses take opportunities to have individual chats with all children about their upcoming move to school.

Sample Handover Piece

If at all possible, on the first day of primary school be present in the yard or in the classroom for a short period to welcome and reassure children. This can be arranged with the school beforehand.

Linking the preschool staff and new teachers on the first day can be an immensely positive emotional experience. The logistics of freeing up a staff member(s) for such an event can be very challenging:

This might be possible if the new preschool children who may be starting on the same day are on a shorter day as part of the settling-in period e.g. the preschool session starts at 10am. This can give the preschool staff an hour or so to be available to the new junior infant children.

Anything is doable with the right amount of planning and communication.



Resource Tool: List of possible books
Page: 50

Early Years Settings

MON TUES WED THURS FRI SAT SUN
calendar

Term One: September to December of 2nd preschool year

- Meet as an organisation to talk about your Transition Policy.
- Complete the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide - Self Evaluation Tool, Element 4: Transition to primary school aistearsiolta.ie/en/Transitions/
- Arrange meetings with primary school staff.

Term Two: January to Easter

- Arrange meetings with parents/families to discuss the transition to school or any other queries around starting school.

Term Three: Easter to June

- Provide an opportunity for parents to share details of the schools their children are hoping to attend.
- Invite primary school staff to end-of-year events such as family days and graduations.
- Transfer of Information Document for primary schools - Keep an eye on the NCCA website for updates.
- Informal chats, either one-to-one or small groups.
- Large group discussions- have circle time.
- Circulate dates and time of local school open days.

Summer Holidays

First Year in Primary School

Term One: September/October of First Year in Primary School

- Early Years practitioners invited to classroom or the school yard for short period on first day to reassure children.

Primary School

Resource Pack



Many children see starting school as a positive and exciting change but many others experience starting school as an unsettling time.

Research shows that the first experience children have of school has a great impact on their progress and future schooling. Schools play a key role in supporting the child and family to become more familiar with the new environment.

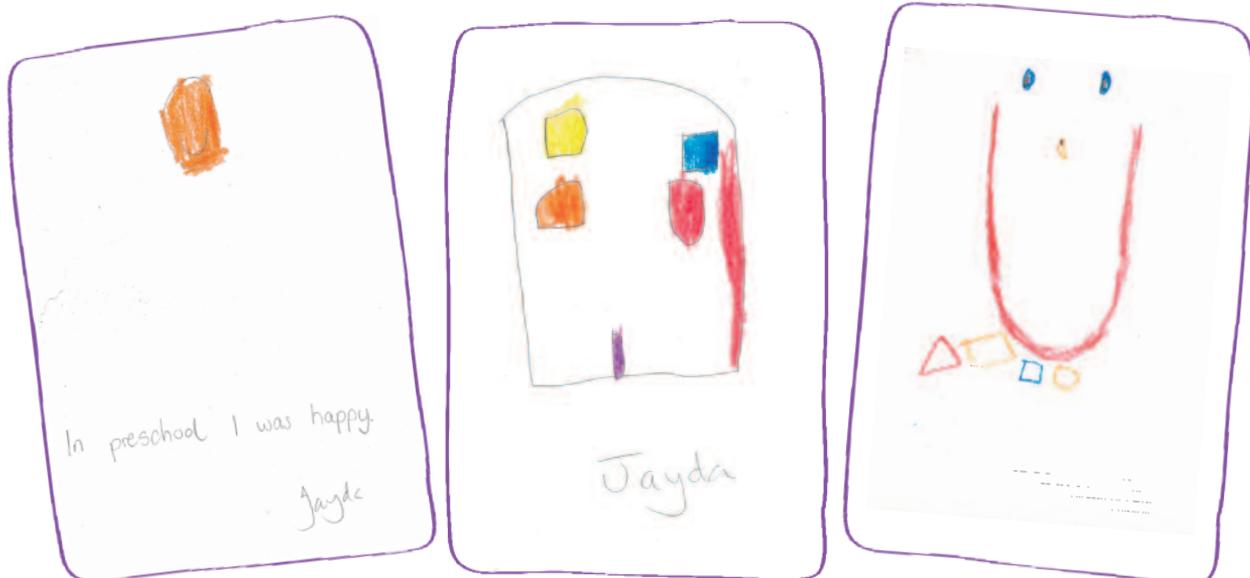
In doing this, you are helping the child to feel secure, confident and able to tackle the challenges ahead.

Supporting the transition of children to primary school needs to be considered as a process and not a one-off event. There are many people involved with the child as they start school and lots of information that needs to be shared. For this reason, the success of any transition programme depends largely on communication and collaboration between all people involved in the process.

This pack is designed to help make it easier for schools, to engage in transition-supporting activities. It includes examples of the kind of things HSCLs and teachers can do to support and facilitate effective communication by giving children and families opportunities to become familiar with new routines and people. There is a range of useful tips and activity ideas as well as an easy-to-follow calendar to guide you through the process. The calendar provides a quick reminder of what to do and when to do it.

All of these suggested tips or practices are just suggestions. If they can't or don't work for your school, that's fine. Every school is different, as are the demands on them. The important thing is that you have structures and practices in place to support the transition.

The resources in this pack have been carefully developed from discussions with children, parents, Early Years practitioners, HSCLs and primary school teachers in your local community. Their valuable feedback has been combined with the best national and international research to bring you this guide to supporting children's transition from EYS to primary school.



step 1

Work on developing a clear Transition Policy

- 1 Meet as an organisation to talk about your Transition Policy.
- 2 You might even consider if it would be useful to identify a Transition Coordinator (most likely the HSCL) to liaise with local Early Years Service.
- 3 It is good practice for Schools to have a Transition Policy that can be agreed and shared with parents and EYPs.
- 4 A key objective of any transition programme should be to support the child and family to feel more at ease in the school environment, so they can feel more confident and enthusiastic about the changes ahead.

Resource Tool: Tip for developing an effective Transitions Policy
Page: 57

What is the goal of the strategy?	Describe planning and management of transitions, consistency in the curriculum, staff roles and resources usage and close involvement of parents to ensure continuity of experiences for children (from Section 12)
What do the children learn from this strategy?	Children understand the relationships, develop personal relationships and realise who are teachers, assistants and support staff to support each child's sense of self, identity and ability
What do practitioners learn from this strategy?	Practitioners need to have their involvement in making transitions for their child reinforced and supported. They need frequent opportunities to share information and work between them and the service/provider to help ease transitions for their child
What do the staff learn from this strategy?	Staff members need to ensure that parents are aware of the need for communication and that they are working together for their children. They need to ensure that frequent communication with parents is maintained and that they are aware of their role in supporting both practitioner and child
What does management learn from this strategy?	Management need to ensure that suitable care and attention is given to planning and executing smooth transitions and that staff are equipped/competent in their roles

step 2

Supporting every child's transition through effective communication & partnership

Lots of people are involved with a child as they prepare to start school and important information needs to be shared. This should involve a coordinated process between EYPs and your school. If schools and EYPs have good links then the preschool can support the parents before the child starts school, by signposting to appropriate support and guidance. Parents play a key role in supporting their child to feel comfortable with the transition process.

It is important that children and parents are given opportunities to familiarise themselves with the school environment so they can start building relationships with the key members of staff. Parents and carers need to have clear information about what will be happening and what their role will be in the process.

Tips on fostering introductions between the school and the child

Work in partnership with EYPs. Discuss with your local preschools how they would like to build or strengthen your communication. Discuss the information they know about their children and how best this can be transferred to the junior infant teacher. From September 2018 the NCCA will have a template available that can be used to transfer this information (www.ncca.ie).

Invite the local preschools and the parents to some of your school events. The more often the children and the parents visit the school the more comfortable they will be when they start in September.

Arrange meetings between primary school staff (HSCL/junior infants teachers/Principal) and your local feeder preschools.

Arrange with local preschools to have junior infants teachers visit children in their settings.

When organising open days and information events circulate the details to local EYS.

Encourage school staff to attend events in the local EYS when invitations are received.



Working in Partnership with Families

Organise Open /Information days in school. When organising open days and information events circulate the details to the local EYS.

At information events distribute welcome packs for children. These should include useful information for families and some activities for children.

Give families clear advice on the best ways to communicate with the school.

The HSCL could visit individual children and families at home to discuss starting school.

- Possible content:
- Colouring paper
 - Crayons
 - Bubbles
 - Playdough
 - Play/safety scissors
 - Book



Resource Tool:
Tips for Running an Open Day
 Page: 63



Resource Tool:
Sample Welcome Pack
 Page: 54



Resource Tool:
Sample Photobook Content
 Page: 52



Make a school photobook and distribute to local EYS. A photobook is a useful way to introduce the child to the school, their teacher and their classroom.

Liaise with parents to reassure them that additional supports are in place, where and when required.

Arrange a series of text messages which parents will receive in the weeks running up to the start of school. Use these to provide them with tips and suggestions as to how they can best support their child in the coming weeks.

After children have started school make arrangements to meet parents both formally and informally to develop positive home-school relationships. Building relationships with parents by providing information about how their child is settling in may help relieve parental anxiety.

Is my junior infant child settling into school?	
Name:	Teacher:
1. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	😊 😐 😞
2. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
3. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
4. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
5. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
6. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
7. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	
8. How is my child settling into school for their second term?	

Proposed Content:

- 1. Welcome to school
- 2. Welcome to school
- 3. Welcome to school
- 4. Welcome to school
- 5. Welcome to school
- 6. Welcome to school
- 7. Welcome to school
- 8. Welcome to school
- 9. Welcome to school
- 10. Welcome to school
- 11. Welcome to school
- 12. Welcome to school
- 13. Welcome to school
- 14. Welcome to school
- 15. Welcome to school
- 16. Welcome to school
- 17. Welcome to school
- 18. Welcome to school
- 19. Welcome to school
- 20. Welcome to school

Proposed Content:

- 1. Welcome to school
- 2. Welcome to school
- 3. Welcome to school
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- 14. Welcome to school
- 15. Welcome to school
- 16. Welcome to school
- 17. Welcome to school
- 18. Welcome to school
- 19. Welcome to school
- 20. Welcome to school

Resource Tool:
 Template for what to cover in settling in review meeting
 Page: 60

Resource Tool:
 Tips for running a welcome meeting with junior infant parents
 Page: 65

Resource Tool:
 Tips for running a welcome meeting with parents who don't have English as a first language
 Page: 67

Gathering Information



Submit requests to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for in-school supports for children, where required.

Use information provided in the transfer document to guide the settling-in period for individual children. Valuable information about each child's abilities, dispositions, and skills should be included in the transfer document. This is a quick way to get to know each child as an individual person.

Many of the incoming pupils will have come from preschool where the Aistear Framework is being used. Familiarise yourself with the Aistear principles and consider ways you can make the transition from preschool to junior infants less abrupt.

Resource: Aistear Framework

Parents are encouraged to let the school know if there are significant events happening at home, as it can provide the information they need to be able to help support the child through any of life's changes. However, in order for you to gather this important information, structures need to be in place in the school to support parents to share it.

There are lots of useful resources that have been developed by various support agencies. Familiarise yourself with this information and where to access it, and it can reduce the amount of work needed to develop resources. You can simply build on what already exists.

Resource: Examples of Resources Available



Resource Tool:
Aistear Framework
Page: 68



Resource Tool:
Examples of
Resources available
Page: 61

Developing play-based information resources

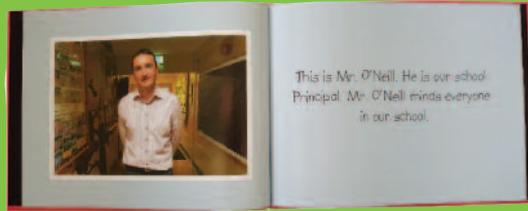


Photo-books

Consider creating a photo book of your school which you can then give to your feeder preschools. Ask them to put it into their library after Easter and encourage children to look at the photos of your school and the staff to help them become familiar with the school.

If the child is unsettled in the classroom it can prevent them from accessing learning opportunities through lack of knowledge about the environment. This could be as simple as where they hang their coat or place their school bag. Early Years Practitioners can strengthen and embed information by discussing it with the children and using photograph books provided by the school.

Postcards

Send postcards to children from the junior infants teacher in the week before school starts welcoming them to school and telling them how excited you all are to meet them.



Play

Incorporate play into the classroom so that you are speaking children's language. On their website the NCCA has podcasts, **videos** and other resources which provide examples of teaching and learning through play.



Resource Tool:
Sample Photobook
Content
Page: 52

Resource Tool:
Sample Template for
Postcard
Page: 56

Primary Schools calendar

MON TUES WED THURS FRI SAT SUN
Term One: September to December of

2nd preschool year

- Meet as an organisation to talk about your Transition policy.
- Arrange meetings between primary school staff (HSCL/junior infants teachers/Principal) and Early Years staff.
- Invite preschool children, their families and Early Years staff to Christmas concerts/shows.

Term Two: January to Easter

- Provide photo-books of school to local EYS for use in Term Three.
- Submit requests for additional supports for children, where required.

Term Three: Easter to June

- Arrange Open/Information days in schools; children and families visiting school and junior infants class participating in activities/playtime.
- Junior infants teacher visiting Early Years service.
- Distribute Welcome/ Information packs to parents, outlining opening times, uniforms, contact numbers, policies etc.
- HSCL visits individual child and parents at home to discuss starting school.
- School staff attending end of year events in local EYS.

Summer Holidays

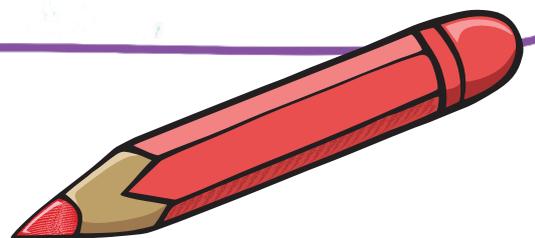
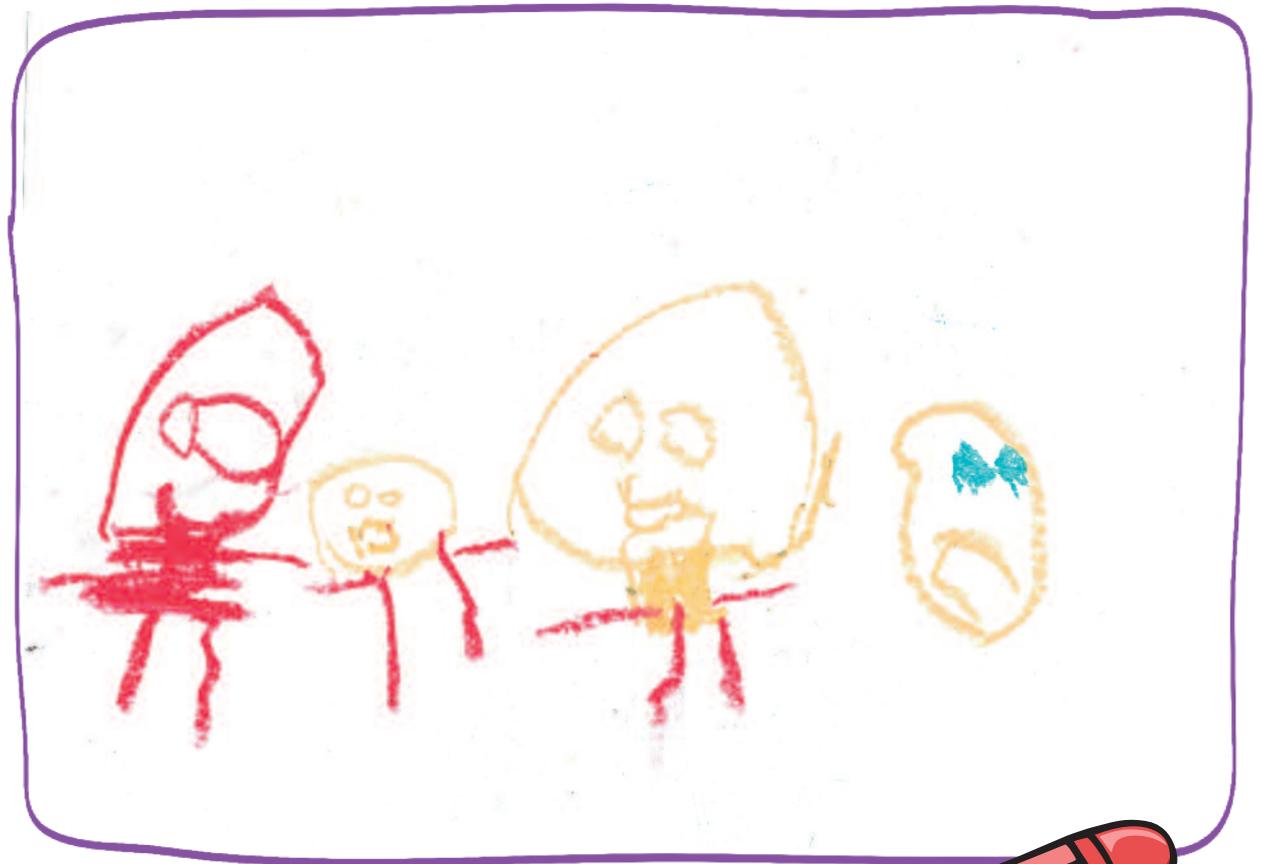
- Liaise with parents to reassure them that additional supports are in place, where required.
- Send postcard to children from their junior infants teacher the week before school starts welcoming them to school.
- Provide parents with some tips and suggestions as to how they can support their child in the run up to their first day, using your school text system.

First Year in Primary School

Term One September/October of

First Year in Primary School

- On the first morning invite the parents for a cup of tea while they are waiting for their child in the parents room.
- Use information provided in the information transfer document to guide settling-in period for individual children.
- Use Aistear principles in room layout to provide more play-based activities.
- Meet parents and families after children have started to develop positive home-school relationships, both formally and informally.





Me...the child you'

Term One: September to December of preschool year

- Talk about the primary school I would like to go to.
- I'm registered for school. Yipee!
- Listening to family and friend's stories about school.
- I've been invited to attend my primary school's Christmas concert. I'm very excited!

Term Two: January to Easter

- I can do things by myself like going to the toilet, washing my hands, blowing my nose, pulling up my pants, tights, trousers, etc.
- I can tidy up my toys and books when finished playing.

Term Three: Easter to June

- I've visited my school for an Open/ Information day.
- I can share the worries in my head, the feelings I have.
- There are story books about starting school in my EY service's library.
- I can put on a school uniform when we play dress up.
- We have school bags, lunch boxes and school uniforms for pretend play.
- 'Wally', the puppet, is talking a lot about going to primary school.
- I've planted a sunflower seed to grow, just like I am growing.
- Teachers from the primary school are coming to our end-of-year Celebration Day and Family Day.
- We chat about primary school in circle time.
- I have visited my school and have seen my classroom, the toilets and where I will hang my coat.
- I've played and had fun in the school yard.
- I got a welcome pack.
- One of the teachers visited me and my parents at home.



re doing all this for

Summer Holidays

- I'm hearing stories about primary school.
- We've been shopping for my uniform and my name is written on all my school clothes.
- I got a postcard from my new school to tell me that they are looking forward to seeing me in September.

First Year in Primary School

Term One: September/October of First Year in Primary School

- I like knowing that grandad will collect me every day. He is always waiting for me before the bell rings.
- I love having lots of new friends.
- My parents tell me how proud they are of how well I'm doing.
- I have time every day to chat about how my day was.

My name is...

My new school is...

My teacher is called...





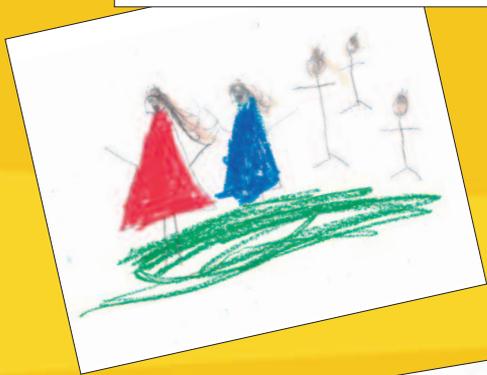
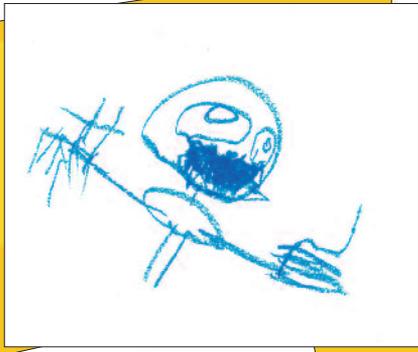
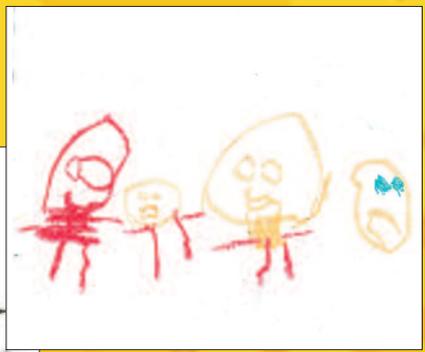
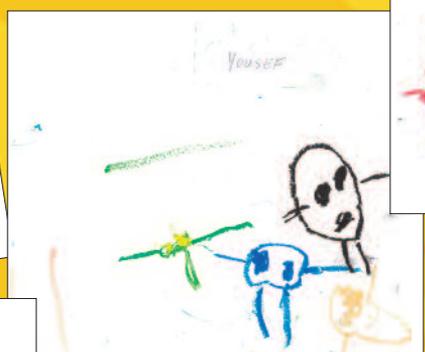


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Appendices

Transfer Document

Example of transitions activities such as Transitions Flower.

sample postcard

Build their self confidence and a positive self image

Example of school visits schedule - St Mary's



Examples of story books

Example of School Welcome pack

Example of photo book



School bag magnet

Things to think about when writing your Transition Policy

Tips for Parents from Parents

Things that may indicate your child is ready to start school

Child's Name	School's Name	Parent's name	Contact details (Optional)
Isabel	Presentation Primary	Paul	086 222222
John Joe	St Mary's	Aileen	086 888888
Maisie Walsh	St Patrick's girls	Dominic Walsh	086 777777

Example of list on door

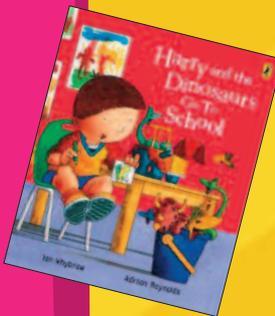
Tips for an Open day

Self-care skills

Things to think about when writing your Transition Policy



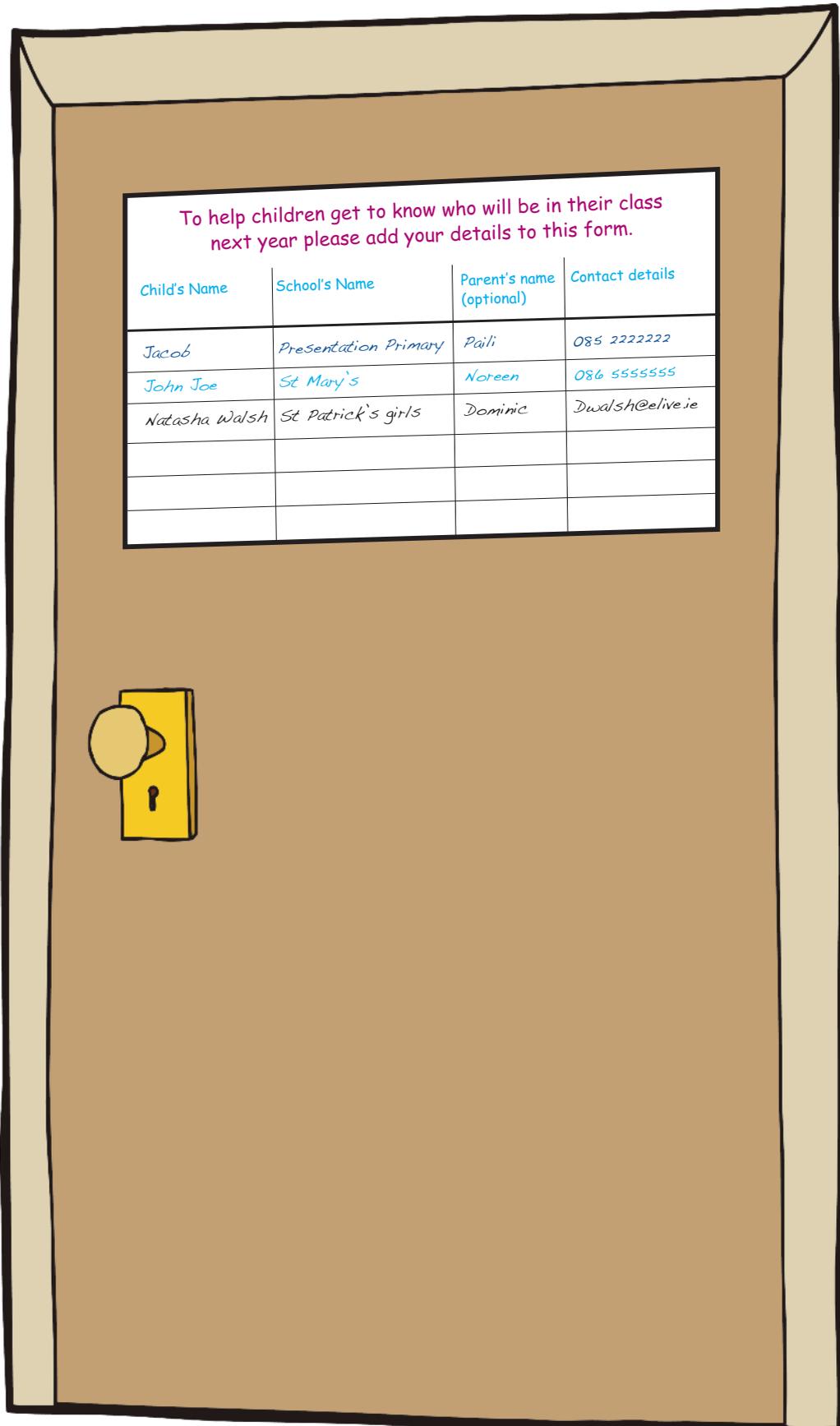
Transfer Document



Appendix 1

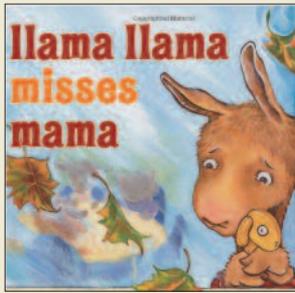
Example of list on door

This can be posted in Early Year services so parents can get a sense of what other children will be attending the same primary school as their child.

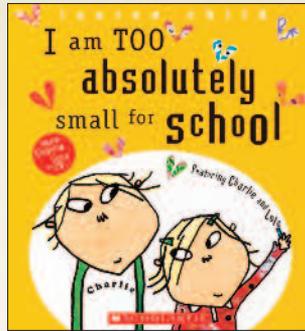


Appendix 2

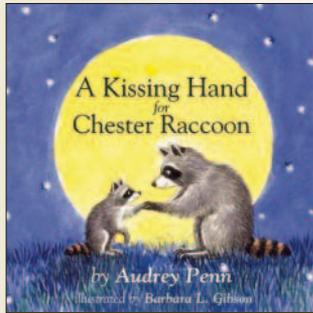
Examples of starting school story books



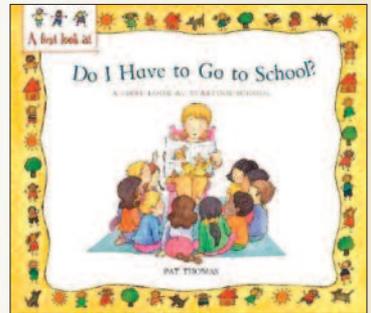
Llama Llama Misses Mama
by Anna Dewdney



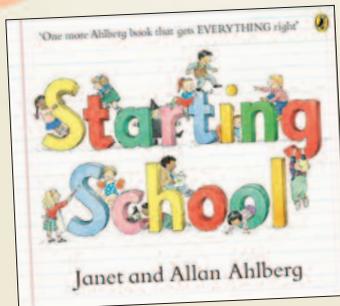
I Am Too Absolutely Small for School
by Lauren Child



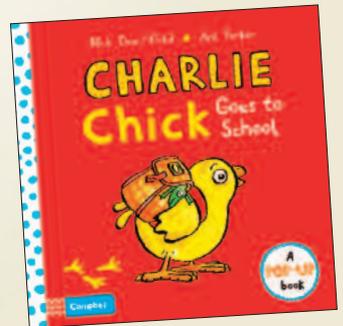
The Kissing Hand
by Audrey Penn



Starting School:
Do I Have to Go to School
by Pat Thomas

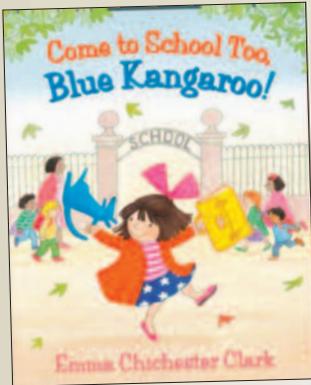


Starting School
by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

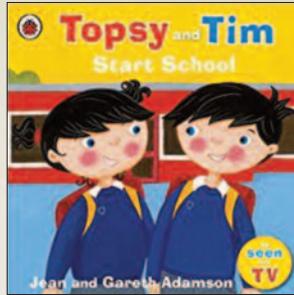


Charlie Chick Goes to School
by Nick Denchfield

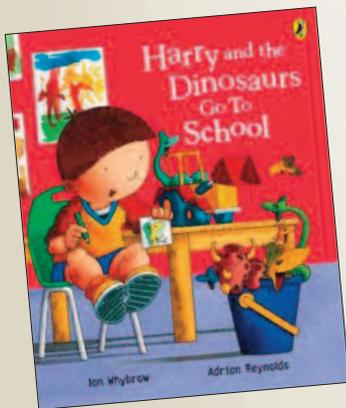
There are lots of choice when it comes to books about starting school.
To help you get started here is a small selection that you might like to choose from.



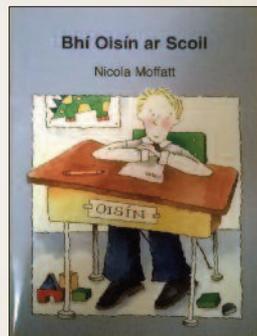
Come to School too,
Blue Kangaroo!
by Emma Chichester Clark



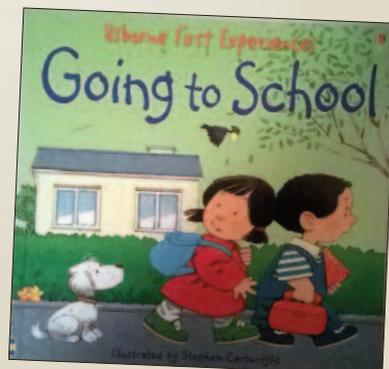
Topsy and Tim Start School
by Jean Adamson



Harry and the Dinosaurs
Go to School
by Ian Whybrow



Bhí Oisín ar Scoil
by Nicola Maffatt

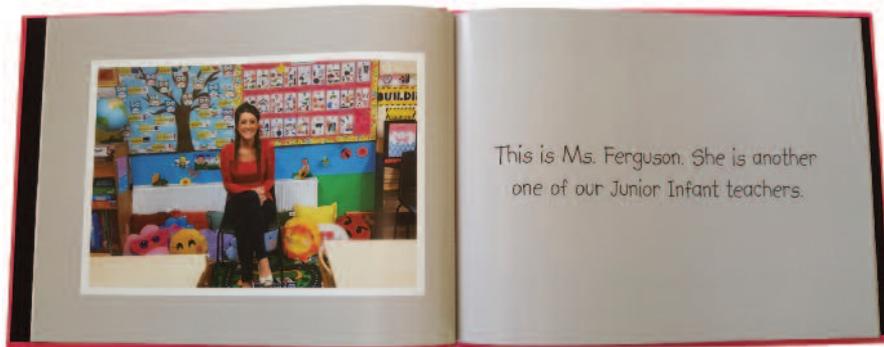
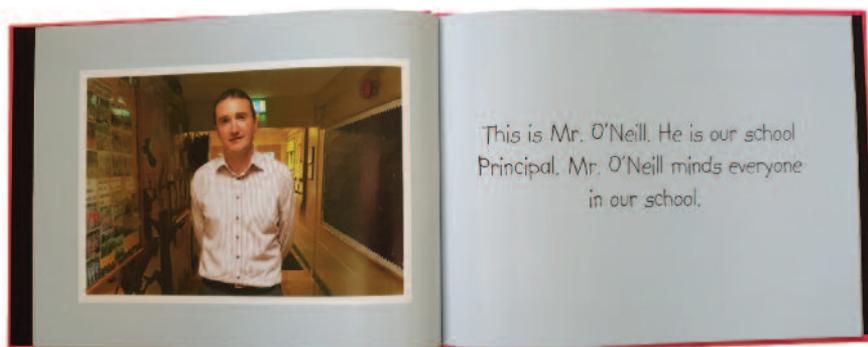


Going to School
Usborne First Experiences

Appendix 3

Sample photo book

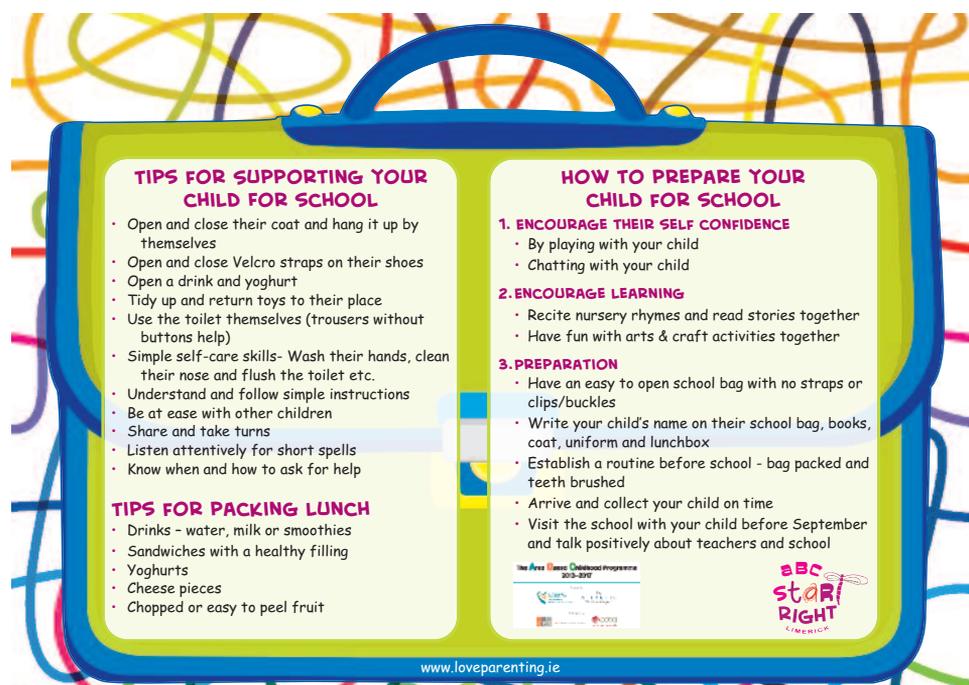
(Thank you to Corpus Christi School, Limerick)



Appendix 4

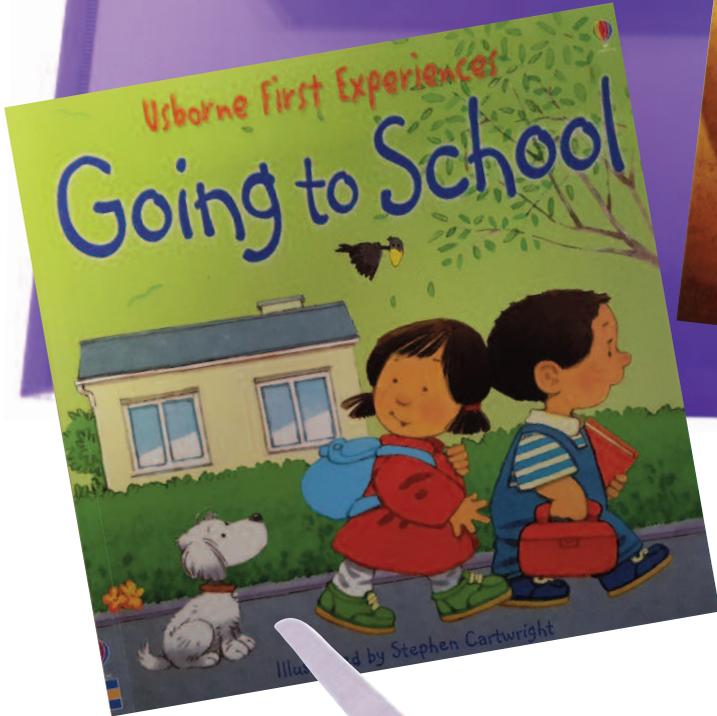
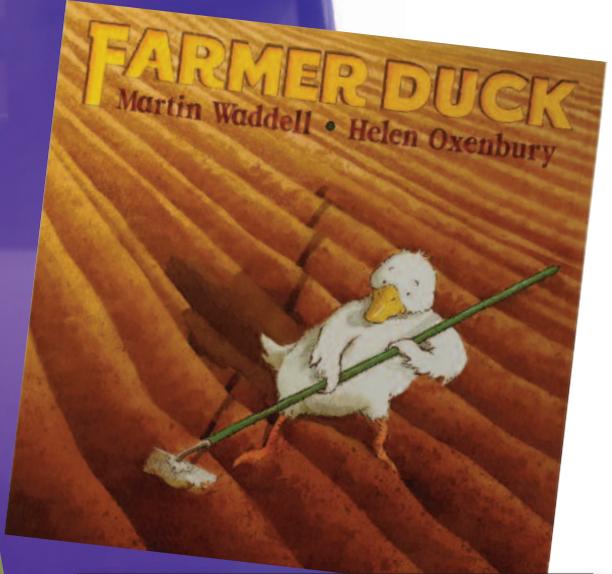
Tips for starting school

Fridge magnet

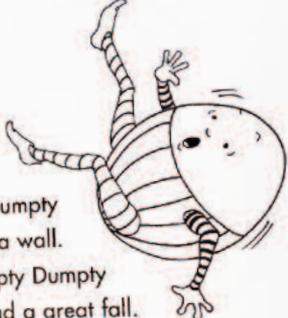


Appendix 5

Sample welcome pack



HUMPTY DUMPTY



Humpty Dumpty
Sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty
Had a great fall.
All the king's horses
And all the king's men
Cannot put Humpty
Dumpty together again.

Appendix 6

Example of school visits schedule

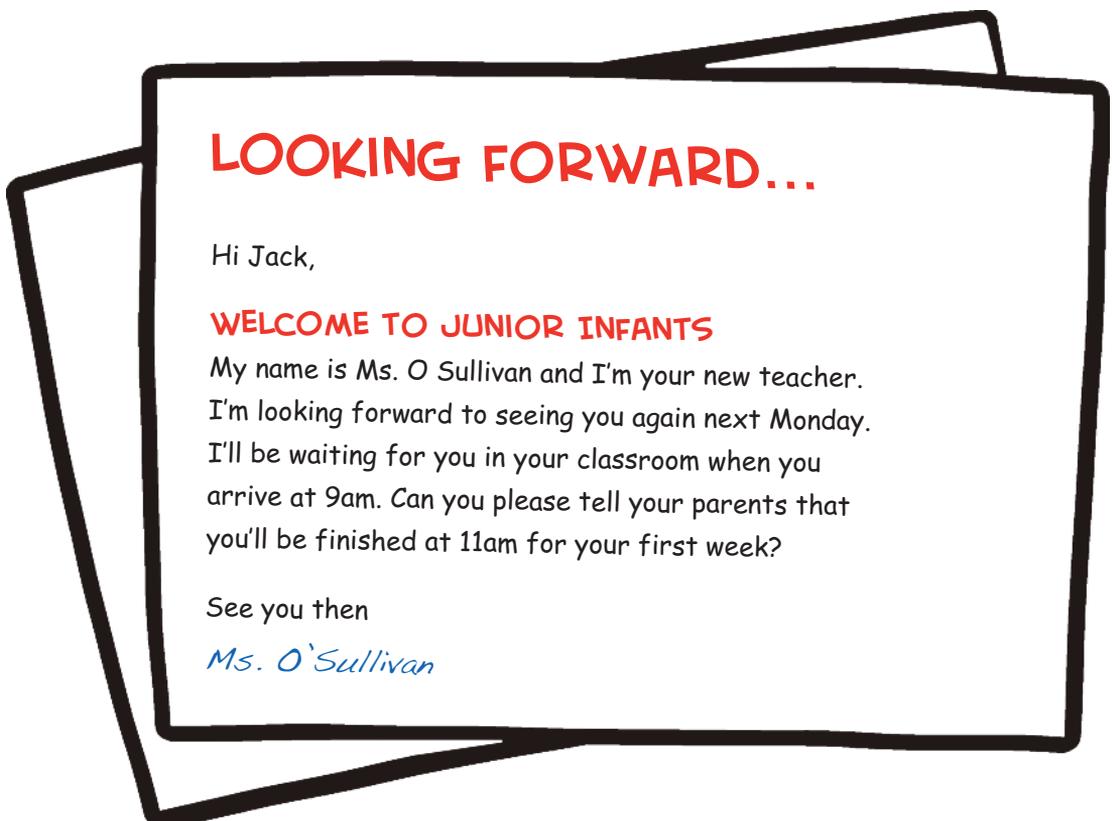
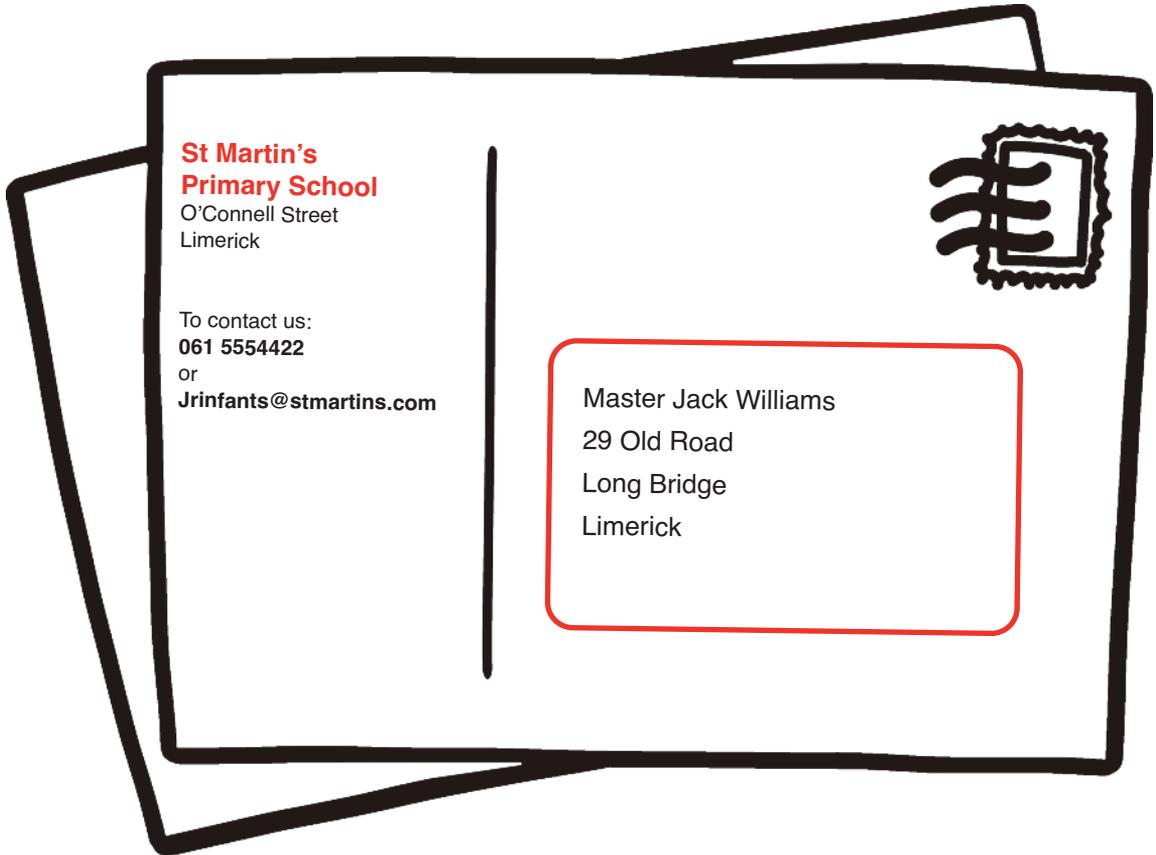
JUNE						
MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1 Principal and the Home School Liaison will visit the local Pre Schools and invite children to visit "Big School"	2	3	4
5	10.00 to 10.15 yard only visit, (local preschools, new child and their parents are invited to visit the school yard and spend a little time playing in the empty yard)	Parents will be invited to these sessions if they are available	8	Preschool to attend a short part of St Marys in- school music concert on Fri 9th June starting at 11am	10	11
12	10.45 to 11.00 play with children in yard, (local preschools, new child and their parents are invited to visit the school yard.	14	15	9.00 to 9.15 observe a lesson in class, (local preschools, new child and their parents are invited to visit the Jr infant classroom to observe a lesson given by the teacher)	17	18
10.45 explore an empty jr infants classroom, remain inside and join in when infants return to class for short lesson	20	21	Principal and the Home School Liaison will attend preschool Graduations	23	24	25
Information Transfer Booklets/sheets will be given to junior infant teacher in last week of June	27	28	29	30		

St. Mary's National School, Bishop Street, Limerick

(very kindly shared for the purposes of this guide)

Appendix 7

Sample Postcard



Think about when writing your Transitions Policy...

Within the Early Years context a Transitions Policy guides your practice in relation to all transitions that occur for the child on a daily basis, primarily focusing on how the child is supported by the adult in doing so.

The transition to primary school element of the policy, like all other transitions experienced by the child, needs careful consideration and clear procedures. Within the school context settling-in procedures need to mirror those of the Early Years setting in supporting the child.

When considering and/or reviewing your policy reflect on the following:

<p>What is the goal of the policy?</p>	<p>Sensitive planning and management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings and close involvement of parents to ensure continuity of experiences for children (Siolta Standard 13).</p> <p>Relationships and routines which are consistent, predictable and responsive to support each child's sense of trust, security and identity.</p>
<p>What do the children need from this policy?</p>	<p>Children need consistent key relationships, carefully planned introductions to all school routines and experiences to help ease any anxiety they may have relating to change.</p>
<p>What do parents/carers need from the policy?</p>	<p>Parents need to have their involvement in easing transitions for their child welcomed and supported.</p> <p>They need frequent opportunities for sharing information and goals between them and the service/school to help ease transitions for their child.</p>
<p>What do the Early Years Practitioners and School staff need from the policy?</p>	<p>Staff members need to ensure that parents are aware of the need to be involved with them in easing transitions for their children.</p> <p>They need to ensure that frequent communication with parents is maintained and that they are aware of their role in supporting both parent/carer and child.</p>
<p>What does management need from the policy?</p>	<p>Management need to ensure that sensitive care and attention is given to planning and ensuring smooth transitions and that staff are supported accordingly in their roles.</p>

(Adapted from 'Whats New...', Barnardos 2012)

Self-Care Skills for 4 and 5 year-olds that will make school life easier



Dress independently

Pay particular attention to being able to:

- pull up and down trousers and tights
 - putting on and off shoes, coat, hat, scarf and gloves
 - practice using snaps, zippers and buttons.
-



Hygiene and toileting

Your child will need to be able to use the toilet themselves independently.

This means:

- wiping and cleaning themselves
- washing their hands and
- flushing the toilet when they are finished.

Sneezing, coughing and blowing their nose are all skills that children will be becoming increasingly familiar with at this stage.

.....



Self feeding

Many schools provide school lunches but your child will need to be able to:

- serve themselves
 - open their bag/box
 - lay out their food themselves
 - open water bottles
 - insert a straw into their carton
 - clean up after they have eaten
 - tidy away any rubbish and
 - mop up any little spills.
-



Do simple tasks

Keep track of their belongings, e.g. coat, hat, scarf and gloves

Be able to:

- take books, copies and pencils out of their bags and
- put them all away when finished.

Follow a set of two or three instructions.

An example:

'when you have finished your colouring, please put your crayons back in the box and give me your page.'

Questions to help you gauge if your child is ready to begin primary school

The key areas of maturity and development are the social and emotional areas
Your child does not need to be able to do all of these but they will help them settle into the school environment and routines.

Yes No

1 Can your child make an independent decision and follow through on this?

2 Does your child have ideas of their own?

3 Can your child listen and follow two or three instructions at the same time?

4 Can your child move on to new activities easily?

5 Does your child separate well from you or their carer?

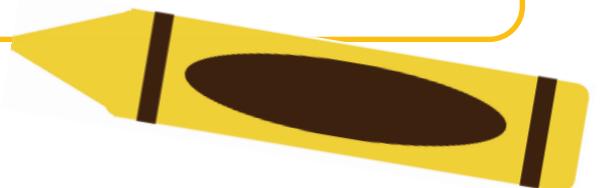
6 Does your child show interest in other children?

7 Does your child interact with other children?

8 Can your child recognise and express their feelings and needs?

9 Can your child concentrate on a task?
Play alone for a period of time?

10 How does your child deal with frustration?



Talking with Parents about how their child is settling in at school

To be completed by the junior infant teacher and shared with parents.

Is my Junior Infant child settling into school?

Name: _____ Teacher: _____



	October 2017 My child has been in school for two months now			
1	Is my child happy in school?			
2	Does my child play with other children in school?			
3	Does my child eat at break times?			
4	Can my child ask to go to the toilet?			
5	Can my child get their own coat and bag at going home time?			
6	Can my child share and take turns?			
7	Can my child let the teacher know how they are feeling?			

Resource to distribute to Parents

Additional Resources for Parents

1

Your child in Primary School tips for Parents from the INTO

www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/TipsforParents/2017_Tips_Eng.pdf

2

Going to Big School tips for Parents

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Early-Childhood_Going-to-Big-School.pdf

3

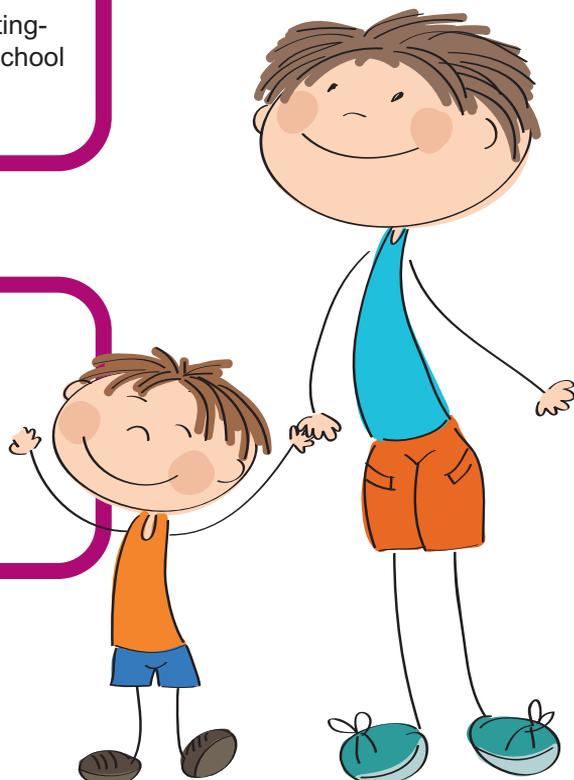
Kids Matter Videos and Information on Getting ready for school

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/early-childhood/starting-school-resources/1-thinking-about-transition-school

4

Transition to School Family Resources

www.ecia-nsw.org.au/tts-content/families



Tips for Parents from Parents who have experience of the transition process

Take up the opportunities to visit the school and talk about all interactions with the school

Speak positively about the school

Try on the uniform a few times over the summer

Encourage your child by reassuring them that all will be ok

Get into a routine early on, so you're all ready - not shell shocked - in September

Visit the school as much as you can beforehand

Give the school as much information as possible when filling out the enrollment form

Don't hang around for too long on the first morning as they may cling to you and it could unsettle them

If you have any problems or concerns go straight to the teacher

Tips for Parents from Parents

Walk past the school - familiarise your child with their new route and with the building

Encourage stories from older kids about your child's new school

Attend every course/activity that is offered in the school

Meet the class teacher before they begin

Keep encouraging your child and stay positive when talking about school

Find out from the start the best way to communicate with your child's teacher

Tips for organising an Open day for Enrolled Childrens Parent(s) Meeting Summer Term before Starting School

1

A list of suggested ideas that the HSCL Co-ordinator might find useful in running an open day for infants enrolled in your school:

- Run events in conjunction with the Principal
- Liaise with other class teachers
- Liaise with local preschools
- Provide Welcome pack for pupils which may contain some or all of the following:

Colouring paper	Crayons	Bubbles
Playdough	Play/safety scissors	Book

Due to Healthy Eating Policies it is recommended that sweets are no longer included in the Welcome Packs, as they had traditionally been.

2

Starter pack for parents which may contain some or all of the following:

- o Booklist
- o Uniform list
- o School calendar
- o Nursery rhymes – some of the most popular
- o Relevant school policies
- o Local library membership form
- o “Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out” attendance leaflet from Tusla
- o HSCL Co-ordinator contact details
- o School information booklet/flyer
- o Homework tips

3

Arrange a tour of the school for the children.

4

Pupils may become involved in a class activity.

5

Children might meet other people in the school, such as secretary, caretaker etc.

6

To prevent the children being overwhelmed, they could be shown into an empty classroom first before being brought into a classroom with the current junior infants in there.

7

Activities such as PE lessons and music sessions could be organised over a few weeks for the feeder preschool/s.

Tips for junior infant Parent's Meeting Term One of School

A list of suggested ideas that the HSCL Co-ordinator might find useful in running a Welcome Meeting with junior infant parents in the Autumn term:

- Run events in conjunction with the Principal
- Liaise with junior infant class teachers – all the junior infant teachers should be there if possible so the parents can put a name to a face – principal may need to arrange cover for the class/es to release the JI teachers for the meeting
- Keep it short – ideally 25 to 30 minutes, 40 minutes maximum
- Offer tea, coffee and refreshments afterwards to meet the parents informally
- Arrange tour of the school for parents/guardians who may have missed out on the tour during the Open Day in May
- Liaise with local Public Health Nurse - have representative from PHN at the meeting if possible to provide support and advice to parents when filling out medical consent forms.



Proposed Content:

Welcome the parents/guardians
- Principal

1

Introductions and Explain the roles of the staff present at this meeting
- All

2

Expectations for school: the kinds of things children learn in school and why these are so important
- Junior infant teachers

3

Play: Emphasise the importance of play and that we now know it's how young children learn – discuss Aistear (National Curriculum Framework)
- Junior infant teachers

4

Attendance: Explain the importance of attendance even in junior infants. Mention the 20 missed days rule about referrals – state any specifics in your school. For example, parents will get a text when their child has missed 10 days, 15 days etc. Mention any attendance awards, such as certs, prizes, ceremonies
- Principal

5

Punctuality: Explain how important punctuality is for a junior infant. Academically – a lot of work is done in Juniors first thing so they will miss out; socially – they will not be involved with the class from the start; emotionally – children find it awkward walking into a class late with everyone looking at them
- Junior infant teachers

6

Reading and Phonics: Explain that reading is taught now using phonics and no longer taught as ABCs which many will have learned – state the benefit of phonics – maybe do some of the Jolly Phonics rhymes such as “The snake is in the grass” for S, “Ants on my arm” for A etc.
- Junior infant teachers

7

Other Subjects: What's covered in Maths. For example 1 to 5; other subjects such as SPHE, Drama, Music, SESE etc
- Junior infant teachers

8

Homework: When the children will start getting homework, what is expected, show a sample Homework Folder
- Junior infant teachers

9

Other Programmes: Mention any programmes that will be running later on in the year for the children, such as Little Voices sessions, Buddy Reading, Incredible Years
- Junior infant teachers

10

Other supports: Mention other supports available in the school - Breakfast Club, Rainbows, Creative Therapy, free lunches, etc.

11

Health: Public Health visits to the school (eyes and ears), Vaccination Forms (show an example)
- PHN if in attendance, otherwise
Principal or HSCL

12

HSCL: Explain the role of HSCL and mention any programmes such as Little Voices Loving Language, Incredible Years, Parents Classes and courses that parents and guardians can avail of; if the meeting is not being held in the Parents' Room, tell them about it – have a coffee there afterwards - HSCL

13

HSCL: The HSCL will help signpost or refer you to additional community services, such as bereavement, separation, Family Support Services, counselling
- HSCL

14

Other Skills: Convey the importance of parents as educators of their own children; mention skills they can be practising with their child. These include oral language, fine motor skills (buttons, zips etc), story time, bedtime routines
- Principal

15

Opportunity for parents to ask any questions or can arrange a one to one meeting if required

16

School Tour for anyone who missed the previous tour
- HSCL

17

Tea and coffee and informal chat and exchanges
- All

18

Tips for junior infant EAL Parents Meeting Art and Oral Language Session Term One of School

Caveat: For schools with a high number of parents who don't have English as a first language there is an option to have a more hands-on session with the parents.

The aim is to make the parents feel welcome in the school but to still get across the key messages.

- Run events in conjunction with the Principal
- Liaise with junior infant class teachers – there should be a session in each Junior Infant class - this will mean the sessions will run over a number of days rather than having all the sessions in one day
- Link the art activity/ies with an oral language activity they have been doing in the classroom. The Gruffalo, for example, or some nursery rhymes
- Depending on whether one or two art activities are held, the sessions will be 45 minutes to an hour max
- Offer tea, coffee and refreshments afterwards to meet the parents informally
- Arrange tour of the school for parents/guardians who may have missed out on the tour during the Open Day back in May

The cards are titled 'Language Little Voices' and are organized into four weeks. Each card features a 'Language' icon and a 'Little Voices' icon. The activities include:

- Listening and Attention:** Includes tasks like 'Copy cat' (copying sounds), 'Listen to the teacher', and 'Listen to your eyes'.
- Different Voices:** Includes tasks like 'I see a...' (naming objects) and 'What's that?' (identifying sounds).
- Rhyme Challenge:** Includes tasks like 'Rhyme time' (reciting rhymes) and 'Rhyme challenge' (identifying rhyming words).



Proposed Content:

- 1 Parents come into the classroom and sit with their child
- 2 Welcome the parents/guardians
- Principal or HSCL
- 3 Pupils and teacher sing a song or rhyme they have been learning (ice breaker)
- Junior infant teacher & children
- 4 Play: Explain about the importance of play and that we now know it's how young children learn; mention there will be lots of learning through play
- Junior infant teachers
- 5 Teacher reads from the Big Book or story of the week and asks the children questions
- Junior infant teachers
- 6 Teacher explains and does a demonstration of the first art activity, which is related to the story
- Junior infant teachers
- 7 Hand out the resources to each parent and child group
- Junior infant teacher and HSCL
- 8 HSCL and teacher circulate during the activity as the parents and children work together until the activity is completed by everyone
- 9 Children and Teacher sing some phonics songs from that week eg "The snake is in the grass" for S, "Ants on my arm" for A
- Junior infant teacher & children
- 10 Reading and Phonics: Explain that reading is taught now using phonics and no longer taught as ABCs which many will have learned
- Junior infant teacher
- 11 Teacher explains and does a demonstration of the second art activity, which is related to the story or Nursery Rhyme
- Junior infant teacher
- 12 Hand out the resources to each parent and child group. HSCL and teacher circulate during the activity as the parents & children work together until the activity is completed by everyone
- Junior infant teacher and HSCL
- 13 Punctuality: Explain how important punctuality is for a junior infant. A lot of work is done in Juniors first thing so they will miss out; socially - they will not be involved with the class from the start; emotionally - children find it awkward walking into a class late with everyone looking at them
- HSCL
- 14 Homework: when the children will start getting homework, what is expected, show a sample Homework Folder
- Junior infant teachers
- 15 HSCL: Explain the role of HSCL and mention any programmes such as Little Voices Loving Language, Incredible Years, Parents Classes & Courses that parents and guardians can avail of; show sample flyers if you have them
- HSCL
- 16 HSCL: The HSCL will help signpost or refer you to additional community services, such as bereavement, separation, Family Support Services, counselling
- HSCL
- 17 Close: tell the parents about the Parents' Room and invite them to have a coffee there afterwards
Opportunity for parents to ask any questions or can arrange a one to one meeting if required
- HSCL
- 18 The children wave goodbye to their parents and all the adults leave the classroom together

Incorporating play in to the classroom

The podcasts and videos on this link give suggestions for planning and organising your classroom and show examples of teaching and learning through play.

www.ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/developments-in-the-early-years-of-primary
(21st December 2017)

Aistear Framework:



Aistear Principles and themes:

www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/PrinciplesThemes_ENG/PrinciplesThemes_ENG.pdf
(21st December 2017)

AistearSíolta Practice Guide:

aistearsiolta.ie/en/

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Stepping%20Stones%20Transition%20Programme.pdf

Parents:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/node/2710

www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au/tts-content/activities-to-help-prepare-your-child-for-school

www.aim.gov.ie/for-parents/

Concrete Suggestion:

Develop a resource for parents that gives them advice and ideas about things to do in the weeks leading up to the first day, the night before the first day and the first day.

(For a sample of this kind of information see.

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/node/2710

www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au/tts-content/activities-to-help-prepare-your-child-for-school)



Helping your child to be ready for school



Helping your child to be school ready starts as soon as they are born. With your help they will learn the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for school and later life.



When you cuddle, play and sing with your baby you are helping them grow up **confident, secure and trusting others**. It's all about warm, loving relationships and well-being.

1

2

As they get a little bit more mobile and begin to **explore** and become **curious**, **chatting** to them about things they see and experience **builds communication, early language and a love of learning**.



3



Emotions play a big role in a child's ability to learn. **Understanding how others feel** starts with **understanding your own emotions**. Help your child by putting names on their feelings. The more often children hear their feelings being named the better they will be able to **manage their emotion** as they get older. A child's ability to bounce back from problems and upsets lies in being able to talk about what has happened and **talking about their feeling**.

4



It is through play that children make sense of their world and learn by doing, **imagining, creating and problem solving**. Sometimes they will want to play with you and at other times they like to play alone or with other children. When you are welcomed into their play allow the child be in charge and follow along even if this means the game makes no sense to you. Your child will learn to **play with others, take turns and stay with challenging tasks**. Play is the foundation for later school learning.

Some things that might show you I am ready for school.
More and more you will see that I am...

Confident | secure | Trusting others | Curious | Exploring the world | Chatty
Imaginative | Creative | A problem solver | Able to get on well with others
Learning and loving it | Able to understand how others feel | Staying with challenging tasks
Able to understand and name my own emotions



