

# National Síolta Aistear Initiative Newsletter

## Welcome to the third edition of the *Síolta Aistear* Newsletter

Welcome to the third edition of the *Síolta Aistear* Newsletter. Here you will find information to keep you up-to-date on the latest developments relating to the national early childhood frameworks, *Síolta* and *Aistear*, and the [Aistear Síolta Practice Guide](#), the online resource designed to help you to use *Aistear* and *Síolta* together.

## In this issue, you will find...

- Introduction to the New *Aistear* Coordinator
- Dispositions Tip Sheets
- Update on NSAI
- Information on Preschool to Primary School Transition Initiative

**The newsletter will be published regularly, so keep an eye out for new issues!**



Lorraine Farrell new *Aistear* Coordinator

## *Aistear* Coordinator

As some readers may be aware, Lorraine Farrell joined NCCA as the new *Aistear* Coordinator in January 2018. Lorraine is already familiar with the field, having been one of the 27 mentors involved in piloting workshops and coaching as part of the National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative. She brings extensive experience and expertise as an early childhood practitioner, as a Development Worker providing CPD to practitioners and, most recently, as Acting Co-ordinator of Longford Childcare Committee.

Lorraine can be contacted on [Lorraine.farrell@ncca.ie](mailto:Lorraine.farrell@ncca.ie) or on 087 9837133.

## Spotlight on... Dispositions

This month we are going to look in more detail at dispositions in babies, toddlers and in young children. This is a result of feedback from the sector and an appetite for a greater understanding of how dispositions are relevant to child development in the early years and how to utilise them in a meaningful way in our everyday practice with children aged 0-6 years.

### What is a disposition?

*Aistear* defines dispositions as 'enduring habits of mind and action. A disposition is the tendency to respond to situations in characteristic ways' (*Aistear*, 2009, p.54).

Positive dispositions mentioned in *Aistear* are independence, curiosity, concentration, creativity, responsibility, resilience, patience, perseverance, playfulness, imagination,

being interested in things, enjoying problem solving, being a good listener, assessing and taking risks, being friendly, wanting to communicate, being accepting of others and of differences, being considerate, being happy, cooperating with others.

*Aistear's* themes describe what children need to learn from birth onwards and the framework outlines learning in four interconnected aspects: skills, attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding, and dispositions.

Skills for babies and toddlers include things like grasping, feeding themselves, walking and communicating non-verbally and verbally. Attitudes and values at this age include developing a positive self-image and a positive attitude to learning, while knowledge and understanding includes, for example, learning 'rules' for interacting with others like turn-taking.



*Aistear* also describes children's learning in terms of dispositions that babies and toddlers need in order to achieve their full potential. Dispositions, such as independence, curiosity, cautiousness or creativity are often described as innate or natural character traits that children possess from birth.

However, adults can have an impact on the development of positive learning dispositions.

*Síolta* also recognises the importance of recognising and nurturing individual children's dispositions. Examples of this are found in Standard 1-Rights of the Child and Standard 5-Interactions which both encourage practitioners to reflect on how children are supported to participate in activities and interact with others in a way that suits their individual dispositions. *Síolta* acknowledges the central role of the practitioner in providing opportunities for learning and development that value individual interests, needs and dispositions and that support a positive sense of self and group identity.

There are two very helpful Tip Sheets on dispositions on the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide website. You will find the Helping babies and toddlers to develop positive learning dispositions [here](#) and the Helping young children to develop positive learning dispositions [here](#).



## There has been lots going on behind the scenes within NSAI over the past few months....

### *Evaluation Report*

The National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative Final report: Evaluation of Aistear Workshops and Coaching Pilot was published early in February. This report is based on feedback from mentors and practitioners and has some very interesting findings. You will find the full report on the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide website or by clicking [here](#).

### *Working Group*

The evaluation report discussed above identifies key recommendations which need to be considered in advance of the wider national implementation of the NSAI initiative from autumn 2018.

Arising from these recommendations, a working group was established to review the findings with a view to adapting the materials and processes associated with the *Aistear* strand of the NSAI for national availability. Additionally the working group will revisit the *Siolta* materials to ensure alignment and connection between *Siolta* and *Aistear* in CPD resources within both strands of the initiative in order to provide as much integration as possible.

### Review

The NSAI currently operates a mentoring model, whereby a number of *Aistear Siolta* mentors have been nominated by City and County Childcare Committees, NVCOs and ABC projects, and have been working with the national coordinators. A review of the current mentoring model within the NSAI is taking place in Spring 2018. All partner

organisations have been invited to feed into this process and a number of mentor focus groups will also be facilitated. Organisations and mentors will be contacted individually to partake in this process. This review will also seek input and feedback from participating early years services.

### [AistearSiolta.ie](http://AistearSiolta.ie)

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, work on redeveloping the *Aistear Siolta* Practice Guide is ongoing. We are working on making the 'search' function live as well as adding more resources to various sections as has been highlighted in feedback from mentors, Better Start Early Years Specialists and the Early Years Inspectorate. We will keep you up to date as this work progresses. Your continued feedback on the practice guide is much appreciated and very welcome.



## ***Siolta* Quality Assurance Programme Validations**

The *Siolta* Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) is a ten-step process designed to provide structured, supported engagement for early childhood settings who wish to seek external assessment of their provision/practice against the *Siolta* standards and components of quality. A setting must have an assigned *Siolta Aistear* Mentor to take part in the QAP.

Achieving validation under the *Siolta* QAP demonstrates dedication to the delivery of high quality early childhood education for young children and their families.

We would like to warmly congratulate the following settings who have been validated since our last newsletter was published:

- **Barnardos Finglas Early Years Service**, Finglas, Dublin 11
- **Barnardos Tivoli Early Years Service**, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
- **Newtown Kids Club**, Tuam, Co. Galway
- **Our Lady's Nursery**, Ballymun, Dublin 1

**Huge congratulations to all involved, it is a wonderful achievement!!**

## **Increase in number of *Siolta* Validators**

*Siolta* Validators receive initial training and ongoing CPD from the Department of Education and Skills to support them in their role. We have recently trained a number of additional *Siolta* Validators which means a wider geographical spread as well as minimising waiting times for settings who have submitted an application for validation.



## NCCA's Preschool to Primary School Transition Initiative

The report on the NCCA's Preschool to Primary School Transition Initiative is now available on the [aistearsiolta.ie](http://aistearsiolta.ie) website or by clicking [here](#). The NCCA has been given the task of developing national templates to record each child's learning and development at the end of the preschool year before they begin primary school. These reporting templates will be available from Autumn 2018.

As preparation for this task, the NCCA published three research reports about the transition to primary school. These are available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) Key messages from the reports include the following:

- A **positive experience** for children during the transition to primary school is important.
- Certain **dispositions, skills and knowledge** are important for children as they make the transition to primary school and, therefore, should be focused on in preschools.
- Greater **alignment in curriculum and pedagogy** across preschools and primary schools is highlighted as being critical to children's learning and development.

- Supporting transitions is a **shared responsibility between families, preschools and primary schools**. There is a need for all involved to work together to support the child's transition and there is less focus on a child's 'school readiness' and a greater focus on 'ready schools'. Parents' awareness of, and involvement in, supporting their children's transition from preschool to primary school is very important.
- The **transfer of information on children's learning and development between preschools and primary schools** is an important part of the transition process and can act as a lever in opening up the relationship between preschools and primary schools as well as helping support continuity and progression for the child.

If you would like more information on the NCCA Transition from Preschool to Primary School Initiative please contact [mary.daly@ncca.ie](mailto:mary.daly@ncca.ie)



## **Insights and Future Developments:** A review of the First Year of Implementation of Early Years Education-focused Inspection, April 2016 - June 2017

Recently the Minister for Education and Skills and Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, welcomed the publication of Insights and Future Developments: A review of the First Year of Implementation of Early Years Education-focused Inspection, April 2016 - June 2017.

This is a Review of the first year of Implementation of Early Years Education-focused Inspection and provides the first detailed, composite evaluation of the nature and quality of early childhood education provision and practice under the ECCE Programme.

You can read the full report [here](#).

### **Send us your ideas!**

As this is a new initiative, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Let us know what you would like to see in future editions of the newsletter by emailing us at

[earlychildhood@education.gov.ie](mailto:earlychildhood@education.gov.ie)

