

Transition: Moving from Preschool to Primary

Suggested activities for preschools to support a positive transition to school

There are many ways in which you can help children prepare for the move to primary school. For example, children need to have certain dispositions and skills. These include oral language/communication and social skills as well as positive learning dispositions like independence, curiosity and resilience.



Providing opportunities for children to develop these through your ongoing preschool activities and routines is very important. Make sure you provide lots of opportunities for children to:

- be independent, especially in caring for themselves
- talk, communicate and play with each other
- practise problem-solving skills and to learn to persevere when things don't go as they had planned
- explore the world around them and to take learning risks, especially outdoors.

Don't forget to use *M'Scéal: Moving from Preschool to Primary* Reporting Templates to share information about children's learning with parents and schools.

Below are further practical ideas that you might consider using from early May onwards. You might also devise other transition activities, perhaps in collaboration with local primary schools. See the tip sheet *Joint transition activities for preschools and primary schools* for ideas.

Involve children in planning transition activities – what do they want to know? It's important to talk to the children and to listen carefully to their responses. Record your observations of the children - their comments, responses and questions during play and guided discussions about moving to primary school.



Transition activities

Photo books and wall displays

Make photo books of local schools with different sections of the internal/external school building, school uniform, staff members. You could photograph the preschool mascot (bear/doll) touring the school. Leave the books around for children to look at or sit with a couple of children to talk about them and listen to their observations and questions.

Create a wall display of photographs of local schools.

- Place the children's and teachers' photographs (with permission) underneath their respective schools.
- Discuss who will be attending each school and what they will be doing there.

Play and play props

Provide:

- sample/old uniform(s)/track suit(s) in the dress-up area and, if possible, life-sized bear/doll for dress-up. You could ask parents to donate previously used uniforms/track suits.
- access to a transition box with items for junior infants such as threading beads, pegboards, jigsaws, picture and nursery rhyme books, pencil cases, school bags, lunch boxes, water bottles, copies, folders with fasteners. Brainstorm with children what items to include.
- a 'school classroom' for socio-dramatic play. This will give insight into how and what the children are thinking about school.

Discussions about school

Read storybooks about going to school and

- chat about what children are looking forward to and/or worried about starting school.
- discuss the differences and similarities between preschool and primary school.

Children could:

- draw/paint/build a model of what they think school will be like.
- write to junior infant children (scribed by an adult). Posting the letter might be a novelty. The teacher might scribe the answers following a discussion with the children in the class and post a letter back.

Transition activities

Visits

Organise:

- a visit to a classroom during the school day and stay for an activity. Show children where the coats will be, where the toilets are, what toys there are to play with.
- a 10/15-minute visit to an empty school yard. Point out things like the door to the toilets and talk about some of the enjoyable activities they will be able to do in the yard when they start school.
- a bus tour and simply 'drive-by' the local schools. This is a good idea if the children are moving on to a number of schools.
- a virtual visit - use skype/facetime sessions with the school/s. The children in the infant class might show the preschool children around the classroom or the teacher can lead the 'tour'.
- for the teacher to visit (a couple of times) and read a story or take part in some activity. If there are different teachers involved, set up a small group activity with the children who will be going to his/her class.
- a visit from older children to the preschool to tell children what school will be like. This can be a child in 5th or 6th class or a child in junior or senior infants. Questions could be shared in advance.
- a visit to see how the children are settling in to their new school in the Autumn.



Transition activities

Partnership with parents

Encourage parents to:

- support children to be independent in self-care and at home generally.
- label coats/belongings with the children's names.
- organise meeting up during the summer break with children who are going to the same school so they can maintain contact with peers.

Make a wall display of parents' hopes for their children starting school. Encourage parents for whom English is an additional language to write in their own language.

Invite parents with older children in school to offer advice and support to first-time parents.

Organise a parent information session, ideally in collaboration with the school(s). You could share ideas on how parents can help their child be prepared for school and explain the differences and similarities between preschool and school. Also make parents aware that some of them, especially first-time parents may find the transition process difficult and that this is normal.

Ask parents for feedback on their experience of the transition activities and use this along with the insights of the children to enhance the process each year.

