



Guidance for Parents/Guardians for Children Starting First Year

The transition from Primary to Secondary school can be an exciting time in your child's life. However any transition or change can also be challenging. The transition from sixth class to post primary school is a significant change, and your child may need support as they reach this important milestone in their lives.

They may also need support to settle in and adjust to the new school environment. Your child's primary school will have been preparing your child for this change during 6th class. Here are some things that you can also do to support a smooth transition for your child.

1. Help them to Feel Safe

Your child may be feeling excited and happy about moving to post-primary school, as well as feeling a little sad about leaving their primary school, teachers and friends. Your child may also be feeling a little worried about the change. These are all normal reactions and feelings at this important time. It's important for you to know that children feel less worried when they feel safe. The less worried they are, the more they will be able to think, plan and learn. The following may help your child to feel safe:



- Chat to your child about what's good about moving on from primary school and what's good about starting in post primary.
- Ask them about any worries they have, and try to figure out with them ways to deal with these.
- Tell your child that the post-primary school will be working hard to make sure that all students and teachers will be safe during COVID.
- Let them know that they will get to know their new school and that they will have time to settle in.
- Remind them that the school is new to all of the First Year students not just them.



2. Help them to Feel Calm

Your own calmness during this time of change will help your child to approach the transition to post primary school calmly. The following can also help them to feel calm:



- Chat with your child about the things we all do to help us when we feel worried. Breathing deeply, thinking about positive things, getting enough sleep, eating healthily and getting exercise all help. See [here](#) and [here](#) for some more ideas about relaxing and staying calm.
- Remind your child to think about the things they have done in the past that helped them when they were worried.
- Let your child know that lots of children their age find leaving primary to go to post-primary school difficult for a while. Your child will pick up on how you are feeling so it's important that you are positive and calm.

3. Help them to Feel that they can cope


When we believe that we can deal with challenges and handle tough times, we feel better. When we believe that we are supported by others, we also feel better. The following may be useful:

- Let them know that having lots of different feelings about starting in post primary is normal.
- Chat to your child about :
 - the highlights, best experiences, proudest achievements and important things that they learned in primary school
 - a time when they were strong or helped others in the past (this will help them to see their strengths and coping skills).
- Remind your child that they will probably know other children in the post-primary school. Maybe ask one of these e.g. a neighbour's child, a cousin, to talk to your child about what the school is like and/or their experience of First Year, etc.
- Talk to them about making new friends, and how to keep in touch with their primary school friends if not at the same school.
- Tell them who they can talk to in their new school if they have a worry. The school website and communication from the school will usually give you this information.
- Read through this useful [NEPS Organisation Tips Post Primary](#) with your child.



4. Help them to Feel Connected

Building connections for your child with the new school will support their wellbeing and their readiness to learn. The following can help your child to feel connected to the school:




I am part of my class and school. I have a voice and I am listened to



- Making new friends can be a concern for some students as they move to post-primary school. Talk to your child about this. You can practice conversations around making friends. If helpful talk about your own experience of moving to post primary and how you went about making friends.
- Encourage your child to stay in touch with old friends.
- Look up the school's website with your child to see videos, photographs and maps of the school and to keep up-to-date with the school news.
- Find out if there is a buddy/mentoring system available in the post-primary school (check the school website for information) and, if available, tell your child about it.

5. Help them to Feel Hopeful

Hope can help us cope and bounce back when things are challenging. The following can promote a sense of hope:



Being in school helps me reach my goals



- Let your child know that they have lots of things to look forward to - new friends, new subjects, new experiences
- Talk to them about their strengths and interests and how they will use these in their new school.
- Have a family celebration to mark their starting at post primary school. This can give your child a sense of achievement.

6. Getting Support and Information for your child's needs

- If your child has additional needs, making contact with their new post-primary school is very important in order to discuss these needs. The school will be able to reassure you that supports are in place for your child.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

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National Educational Psychological Service

- If appropriate, ask your child what they would like their new school to know about them.
- Making new friends is often a concern for students with additional needs as they move to post-primary school. Use social stories and/or role play/modelling to support your child around how to make and keep friendships. If your child is attending another service, it may be helpful to talk to them. See [here](#) for more information
- Many services/agencies have useful information on line. Take time to look at online transition programmes on the [NEPS](#) , [NCSE](#) and [Tusla websites](#)