

## Starting Primary School

Starting primary school is an exciting time and a time of change.

Children with special educational needs may need more support with the transition to primary school.

Most children will settle easily and at their own pace.

The principal, classroom teachers and other skilled staff support children and parents at this time.

Most children with additional needs attend mainstream classes in their local school.

Mainstream schools have class teachers, special education teachers, and special needs assistants (SNAs) to support children, as needed.

Some children with more complex needs attend special classes in a mainstream school or a special school.

These settings have smaller class sizes with teaching and SNA support.

Students in special classes spend some time in the mainstream class in line with their strengths and abilities.

Careful preparation with your primary school supports an easier transition.

Ideally, this preparation should begin once your child is offered a school place.

But it is never too late to start planning.

There are two important steps to planning and preparing for the transition to primary school.

Step one is sharing information with the school.

Important information to share might include pre-school reports, mo scéal reports, professional reports, and perhaps an access and inclusion profile.

With your permission, the primary school can contact the pre-school or relevant professionals to help gather this information.

Step two is planning with the school.

Planning may involve meeting with parents and students, phone calls or emails.

Planning can involve sharing your hopes for your child's education, their strengths, needs, interests, dislikes and any particular anxieties that you or your child may have about starting school.

These two steps help identify the supports required for your child and to develop a student support plan.

Supports might include:

- Helping your child get to know the environment, their classroom, toilets and playground
- Making changes to the classroom or school
- Adapting the curriculum by the classroom or special education teachers
- SNA supports for a child with significant care needs
- Assistive technology, such as a Soundfield system, for a child with a hearing loss
- Special transports for children attending their nearest special class or special school
- Revising or developing whole school policies

Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) within the NCSE are available to support parents during this time of transition.

You can contact your SENO to discuss your child's educational needs.

Moving to primary school is a journey for both you and your child.

Give time to explore your and your child's thoughts and feelings about the move.

Celebrate their achievements in pre-school.

Junior Infants offers loads of time for play and settling in.

Talk about what they are excited about in their new primary school.

Many children will be feeling excited about going to primary school.

It is also normal to have worries about starting school and making change.

Listen to your child. Talk and help them name their feelings.

Pictures, drawings, photos and writing are useful ways to explore thoughts and feelings.

Some ideas that might help prepare your child are

- Play school with them at home
- Practice activities such as drawing, colouring, jigsaws, reading and telling stories
- Encourage and practice independence in toileting, hanging up their coat, taking turns, opening a lunch box, listening and following routines

Some children will continue to need this support throughout primary school.

If possible, meet up with other parents and children that are starting in that school.

Walk or drive by the school.

Take photographs of the entrance, yards, teachers and make a booklet to use over the summer.

It is important to get the balance right between preparing children for school and overwhelming them by focussing too much on starting school.

Children need time to be children and to play and enjoy the holidays before they start school.

For more information and for useful contact, go to this [website](#).

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