

Supporting your child through school

The move to primary school is a shared responsibility between children, families, communities, pre-schools and primary schools.

Building positive relationships with the school

Children benefit enormously when their parents work closely with the teachers. It is important that you establish and build a positive home/school relationship.

Getting to know other parents

Parents can benefit from the support of other parents in many ways. You may know some parents already through your child's pre-school journey but new connections can develop through conversations outside the classroom door, or at parent's evenings in the school. Joining the Parents Association in your child's school is a great way of meeting other parents.

Listening to and talking with your child

Talk regularly to your child about their expectations and experiences of school. Talk about what they are doing and playing but don't pester. Talk to them about their friends. Encourage them to do their best, affirm their efforts, celebrate their success and display the work they bring home. By listening, you will be able to tune into fears or worries, as well as notice interests and strengths.

Being involved in your child's learning

As the parent, you are the child's important teacher in life. Once your child starts school the most important thing you can do is to get involved in your child's learning. Your involvement says that the school life of your child is important and that you value their learning. At a practical level, this means you ensure your child attends school regularly and on time with the correct equipment and appropriately dressed. This shows the child that their parents value and respect the learning in schools.

Get Involved - Stay Involved

Get involved and stay involved in your child's education and school. By keeping in touch with what is happening, you also help shape and influence how the school works. Your child will benefit by your involvement.

Learning through Play

Children learn through play. Pre-schools and infant classes in primary school recognise the importance of play for children. The curriculum framework Aistear (which means 'journey') helps teachers plan and provide appropriate experiences for each child.

Engaging in play is good for children's health and well-being. It is a way of creating community so that children develop a sense of identity and belonging. It is a way of communicating and exploring and thinking. These, Aistear tells us, are the most important learning outcomes in early childhood and these foundations are laid down in play.

Play is important in children's lives. In pre-school your child probably enjoyed good play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Play should also be a feature of the school day and as such should help in providing seamless continuation for your child. To play, children need:

- People who help them play;
- Places to play;
- Equipment and materials to help develop the play.

Play is enjoyable for young children, it helps them to learn through exploration and discovery. Play also develops their natural creativity and curiosity while simultaneously helping them to make friends and develop their social skills. While playing young children also instinctively develop their problem solving and decision making abilities, so it is important that your child has access to play time each day both indoors and outdoors.



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'Going to Primary School'

Making the Transition from Pre-school to Primary School Tips for Parents

For all of us moving from the familiar to new situations brings excitement, tinged with a little apprehension. For some, big changes bring more apprehension than excitement. We are influenced by our own previous experiences, by the stories we've heard from those who have made this change before us and by the friends, family and teachers who help us to make the move. Children have similar experiences as they make transitions.

The move from pre-school to primary school is a big experience for young children, usually involving a change of location, of friends, of teacher, and a change in the rules, routines and expectations. So, it's a time of uncertainty and therefore daunting. At the same time, it's a wonderful learning opportunity that can give children a new sense of competence and self-confidence. So, the question is: How do we make this transition not just manageable but beneficial for children?



This leaflet provides some helpful ideas.



Preparing your child for school

Preparing your child to start school will help them feel more confident, and enable them to fit in to the school community.

- Link in with your child's pre-school to know how they are planning for children's transition to school and check what you can do at home to help the get off to a good start.
- Be positive - every parent has their own experiences of school, some positive and some negative. But it is important to remember that children learn from their parents. It is important to talk positively to your child about what they can expect at their new school and what your school day were like.
- Visit the school, it's a great idea. Most schools have Open Days and it is a good opportunity for you and your child to:
 - Be familiar with the layout of the school - 'I know how to get there';
 - See the classroom - 'I see where I will be';
 - Meet the teacher who will be teaching your child - 'I know who my teacher is'.



- Chat about school as a place to make friends and enjoy different activities and experiences.
- Encourage your child to ask questions, express ideas and feelings about starting school.
- Encourage your child to practise dressing themselves, packing their school bag and going to the toilet independently, to help them prepare for school.
- Talk about going on the school bus and let them see it in action (if appropriate).
- Avoid stress by getting the book list, uniforms and school bags organised early in the summer.

Being confident that the school is ready for your child

You know your child best. It is important that you share relevant information with the teacher who will be with your child for four to five hours a day on a constant basis. Let the teacher know:

- What your child is good at, what he/she likes and dislike;
- If your child has any special health needs and how they can be managed;
- If there are any issues outside school that may be troubling your child (bereavement separation, moving house);
- Who may collect your child.



Settling your child

Preparing your child to start primary school will help them feel at ease in a new place and be more confident in managing on their own. Remind them that they will be collected at the end of the day.

Ensure your child is aware of what will happen on his/her first day at school. Arrive in good time on the first day. Don't arrive too early as waiting around can raise anxieties. Take direction from the school and arrive at the requested time. This will give your child time to look around the classroom, meet the teacher and maybe recognise some familiar faces

First Day Tips

- Have clothes, uniforms and shoes clean and ready.
- Eat a good breakfast - learning requires energy and enthusiasm.
- Have your child's name on all of their belongings - they will be confident in recognising their own name.
- Have their lunch and/or healthy snacks ready along with the easy to open lunch box.
- Know your route to the school - if time or distance allows why not walk.
- On reaching the door, smile and talk with the teacher in a friendly way. Relax and don't fuss and let your child know that you're confident that they can manage. Remember that your child is alert to the emotional messages you send out, so don't panic and don't let the child see you crying. (If they do, explain that you are crying because this is a happy day).
- Help your child find a seat and hang up their coat. In a new situation, your child may want to hold onto their school bag or put it down beside their chair.
- Support your child to connect with other children around the table with a simple 'hello'. Let your child know when you are leaving and assure him/her you will be back to collect them at the end of the school day.
- If your child is fine going in on the first day, just walk away and don't look for problems where none exist. The majority of children will sail in, no problem. Treat yourself to a cup of coffee and a little treat - this is a big day for you too!
- If your child does cry going in, follow the lead of the teacher. Often children who come in the door crying are okay and are laughing five minutes later. Rest assured that if your child is not settling, the teacher will contact you.
- Make sure to return for pick up on time as children can fret when they see other children leave before them.
- Make sure you are not under time constraints in those first few days. It may take a few minutes to help them settle in - so make sure you have that flexibility. It is important that your child doesn't feel pressurised or hurried.
- Don't expect the teacher to give you detailed feedback in the first two weeks when the whole group is really settling in. If there is any problem the teacher will let you know.
- Ensure your child gets enough sleep and has a good balanced diet - new routines make extra demands on children.