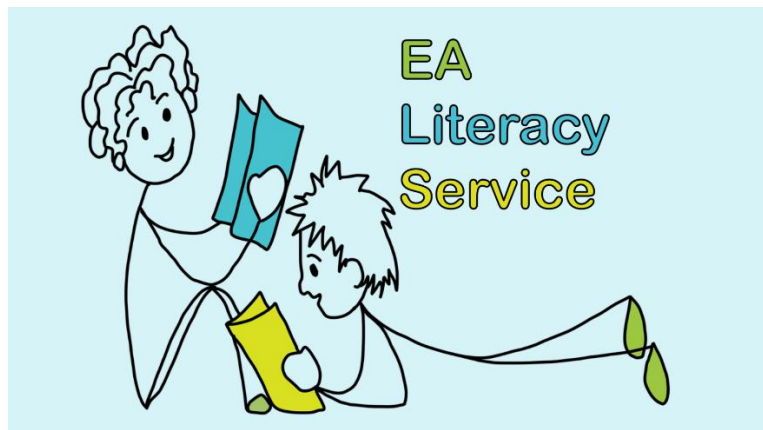


EA Literacy Service

Transition to Post Primary

Guidance for Parents and Carers



This document has been developed by the EA Literacy Service (Northern Ireland). It is intended for parents/carers who may be supporting a child or young person with literacy difficulties at home. Parents/carers may find some of these ideas useful depending on the needs of the child. We hope you and your child find some of the content helpful and enjoyable.

Please note, readers should use the links referenced in this document at their own discretion. Individual websites may contain pop-ups and marketing materials from the organisations providing these services and resources. The inclusion of links does not imply endorsement of any material on these websites, or any association with their operators. The EA Literacy Service cannot guarantee the security of these sites, the operation of the links or that they will be virus-free.

The EA Literacy Service Team,

May 2024

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Transition to Post Primary

Transition to post primary school is a major milestone in a child's education. While the process provides many opportunities for pupils, it is also associated with some social, emotional, and academic issues which teachers and parents should work to negate.

Opportunities:

- ✓ The opportunity to make new friends.
- ✓ The ability to study new and interesting subjects.
- ✓ The option to choose subjects which are most interesting or those which a pupil is best at - as they progress through the school.
- ✓ The opportunity to join new clubs and be part of a large school community.
- ✓ The opportunity to mature and develop and to become more independent as a learner.

Challenges in the early period of transition

- ❖ Emotional concerns may be apparent - such as a feeling that old friends may be lost as they move to different post-primary schools. Many pupils are also anxious about their ability to build positive relationships with new friends and new teachers. For most pupils, the emotional concerns which may be experienced do not persist into term 1.
- ❖ Pupils need to get used to a new school environment with new rules, routines, subjects, and teachers.
- ❖ Learning the names of new teachers and classmates can be difficult for pupils in the early stages of post primary school.

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- ❖ Pupils may have to travel independently to their post primary school, using public transport for the first time.
- ❖ Pupils need to get used to a new structure in their day, where they move around the school and must be independent. For example, knowing where all the classes are in the building(s) and being able to read a timetable.
- ❖ Pupils also need to become more independent at home and be able to organise their uniform and the books/equipment they require for each individual day.
- ❖ Pupils need to deal with a lot of homework from many different teachers, covering a variety of subjects.
- ❖ There is some evidence of a decline in academic performance in the early weeks of post primary transition but in most cases this situation reduces quickly as pupils settle in.

How can parents/carers help?

- ❖ As a parent/carer you can help the post primary school to plan by ensuring all relevant reports and information are forwarded to them.
- ❖ You can share your own knowledge and experience of your child's strengths, abilities and difficulties while also highlighting what works best for them.
- ❖ You can access your chosen post primary school's website which will have school details and may have photographs of the layout of the school and the names/photographs of the teachers and staff who work there.
- ❖ You can talk to your child about their concerns and views on the change to post primary school. You can talk to your child about the journey to their new school, e.g. travelling by bus and what it will involve. Taking them on a 'dry run' to experience the journey, bus route and exchanges is always a good idea.
- ❖ You can support your child with new skills such as reading timetables. The colour coding of timetables and subject specific books can help with personal organisation and it is useful to make several copies of the timetable to stick around the house e.g. behind a kitchen cupboard door and/or in the child's bedroom.

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- ❖ You can help your child to review what is needed the following day and to organise their school bag and equipment the night before.
- ❖ You can help with homework and check your child's school diary to ensure that work is completed and submitted on time.
- ❖ You can be positive and confident about their transition to the post primary school and pass this confidence onto them.

Transition Programmes

It is very important that schools and parents work together to reduce the emotional and academic impacts felt by pupils in the early weeks of transition to post primary school.

Most post primary schools offer excellent transition programmes which provide their 'new' pupils with opportunities to build relationships with their new school, teachers, and classmates. Schools will liaise with parents and carers about the transition and often invite them to visit the new school buildings. There are also some examples of schools offering virtual walk-through video tours so that pupils have some experience of the building and the school environment they will be attending in September. Parents/carers can help with transition by ensuring that they and their child avail of the opportunities made available to experience the new school environment and to meet key staff from the post primary school.

A transition programme will:

- ✓ Prepare both parents and pupils for the transition to post primary school.
- ✓ Will provide parents and pupils with information regarding the policies of the post primary school e.g. regarding the school's child protection policy, internet safety policy, pastoral care policies.
- ✓ Involve designated teachers from the post primary school and the feeder primary schools working together to make the process as easy as possible for pupils.

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- ✓ The best programmes will work to help pupils build new friendships which are so important to ensure pupils settle in quickly.
- ✓ Good transition programmes will provide pupils with opportunities to visit their new school building and to meet their new teachers. Open nights and summer schemes are examples of this process. This familiarisation process often extends to post primary schools sharing facilities such as their larger gym halls, playing fields or stages with primary schools so that the environment is familiar.
- ✓ Many schools offer year 8 pupils a buddy system where older pupils in the school support and mentor pupils during the first few weeks of their new school.
- ✓ The transition programme should introduce pupils to new information such as timetables and the school map.
- ✓ Well-developed transition programmes promote the need for good health and wellbeing among pupils – highlighting the need for good levels of sleep, hydration, and nutrition in order for them to work well in an educational environment.
- ✓ Established transition programmes also work to identify links and progression across subjects which are covered in P7 and year 8.
- ✓ Transition programmes encourage parents/carers to meet with key staff in the post primary setting to share information and work together to resolve problems and concerns.

Key Personnel in Post Primary School:

A big change for pupils entering post primary education is the number of teachers who will be directly involved with them each week. This is different to their experience in primary school when for most pupils, only one teacher is involved in their education. Parents should help pupils to get to know their new teachers and understand the roles of each of these teaching professionals.

The Form Teacher

They mark the roll at registration.

They liaise with other teachers.

They look after your child and look out for their interests.

They get to know your child really well as in some schools, the Form Teacher stays with the same class group for up to 5 years.

Subject Teachers

In Secondary School, your child may have a different teacher for each subject area.

Potentially, they may have up to 14 teachers during year 8 in order to experience the full range of subjects.

Pupils will quickly get to know them in the first few weeks.

Some schools provide pupils with staff photos in advance – this helps with familiarisation.

Pupils may have the same subject teacher throughout their school career.

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Head of Year

Has a pastoral role in school for the Year Group.

Pastoral care is the provision the school makes to ensure the physical and emotional welfare of all pupils. A successful pastoral care programme helps ensure that your child is safe, happy, involved, and able to perform to their potential.

The Head of Year has a management role in organising classes.

They manage behavioural issues for the year group.

They have ultimate responsibility for the pupils in their year group.

The SENCo/LSC

The SENCo is the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. Many schools have begun to use the new title 'Learning Support Coordinator' (LSC) to replace the term SENCo.

This person is in charge of co-ordinating Special Educational Needs support throughout the school.

This means they have a special responsibility for children with learning difficulties.

One of their main duties is to liaise with parents, other members of staff and outside agencies.

This means they can be available to meet with you to discuss your child and their needs, if required.

Useful Links to Further Information for Parents and Pupils:

[Safer School App](#)

The Department of Education in May 2020 launched the Safer Schools App. This is to support all school staff, parents and carers to help keep children in their care safe online.

[BBC Bitesize Starting Secondary School](#)

This excellent resource page provides a wide range of guidance on every issue imaginable such as making new friends, coping with work demands and online safety.

[BBC Bitesize – KS3](#)

Key Stage 3 (KS3) covers the first three years of secondary school and relates to the curriculum for 11 to 14 year olds. This website provides invaluable links to each of the subjects your son/daughter might study and is a great means to reinforce and revise key information. The video format is particularly useful.

[Duolingo](#)

Learning new languages can be a big challenge for pupils as they begin post primary school. This site helps pupils learn a language for free in short daily lessons and covers those most frequently taught in post primary school such as French and Spanish.

[Parenting NI](#)

Parenting NI is a leading charity providing parenting support in Northern Ireland.

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[Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment \(CCEA\)](#)

This guidance aims to support primary and post-primary school principals, senior leaders and teachers to work collaboratively to ensure pupils have positive experiences when moving from primary to post primary school.

[BBC Bitesize - Dance Mat Typing](#)

Using computers to word process work can be beneficial for most pupils and use of a keyboard is an essential life skill in school and work life. The programme above teaches basic keyboard skills and is a fun way to learn touch typing from levels 1-4.

[Doorway online – Text Type 3](#)

This free touch-typing programme takes students from learning the home keys (a s d f g – h j k l ;) to familiarity with the whole keyboard. In addition, Call Scotland has created [The Doorway Online Text Type 3 Practice Book](#) which links nicely with the online lessons, providing daily and weekly activities.

[Libraries NI](#)

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