

The Move to Post-Primary School

Moving from primary school to post-primary can be problematic for all pupils.

One important aspect will be the size of the school – the number of pupils in the school, the number of staff, the number of subjects, the physical size of the school.

Never again will your child have the close one-to-one relationship she/he had with the class teacher in primary school.

The post-primary school will provide initial support to all pupils in adjusting to life at post-primary, but it will also expect your child to show an increasing degree of independence and self-responsibility.

No one in a post-primary school will know all of the pupils. Find out who has the main responsibility for your child. It may well be a few weeks before even this person knows your child. Unfortunately, teachers get to know the good, the bad and the delinquent quicker. If you have a quiet, well-behaved child, despite a learning difficulty they may go unnoticed longer.

Before Entry:

1. Ask for an appointment at least six months before entry.
1. Before going in, photocopy all relevant information. A summary of the main points of the assessment would be useful as well as the assessment itself.
1. Sit down with your child and brainstorm a list of his/her strengths and weaknesses, interests and difficulties.
1. List what types of support would help. Be prepared for the fact that dyslexia may affect the child in different ways at post-primary.
1. If your child has been given extra provision or support at primary level, you need to speak to the post-primary school about the continuity of this help.
1. Generate a list of questions of things you and your child want to know about the school. Some areas of interest to you will be:
 - a. What is the school's policy on SEN (Special Educational Needs) including dyslexia?
 - b. What option subjects are available? Will the school prioritise according to need?
 - c. Is it necessary to take a second or third language as an option?

- d. Is there a good range of practical subjects available?
- e. Is there access for all pupils to a guidance counsellor?
- f. What extra provision or support will be available for your child? How will it be organised?
- g. Mainstream support; how aware are the subject teachers of dyslexia and inclusion issues? Has the school staff had in-service training on the topic? If not, would it be possible to consider having one?
- h. Is there access for all pupils to pastoral care?
- i. Extra curricular activities; what is available?
- j. If streaming or setting is used in the school to organise teaching groups, how is this done? Is it by past achievement, general ability, potential? Timed written achievement tests can militate against pupils with dyslexia. Is there help available at entrance assessment?
- k. If the child has very good maths ability and weaker verbal skills, will it be possible to do higher level maths?
- l. If the pupil has difficulty in taking legible and complete notes in class, could photocopies be made available?
- m. Does the school provide any alternative curricular programmes?

- 1. During the interview, ask your questions and offer the photocopied information to the school.
- 1. Express your willingness to work with the school and to take a role in the development and implementation of an individual learning plan for your child.
- 1. Suggest that the school have a look at the file and then arrange a second meeting to discuss the development of an individualised plan to address your child's needs.

After Entry:

- 1. Ensure continuity - be persistent - talk to all teachers every September. Supply them with the written summary of the assessment. Negotiate with individual teachers as necessary
- 1. Maintain contact with the school - meet the teachers individually if necessary or with a school representative co-ordinating special needs (e.g. SENCO, resource or learning support teacher) and ensure every teacher is aware of your child's dyslexia and any special educational needs.
- 1. Every time your child changes a teacher - you need to approach him/her and ensure that they are aware.
- 1. Discuss with the school whether special arrangements or reasonable accommodation in state exams are appropriate for your child. If such help is appropriate, can it be provided in house exams from first year?
- 1. Is it acceptable for the pupil to use a word processor for homework or class work? Is there training in keyboarding skills available? If not, arrange it yourself.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AT POST-PRIMARY

1. Your child may need help in organising and planning homework, revision schedules, filing of notes, timetables, etc.
1. Your child may need training in the use of the homework journal both for remembering to do homework and packing the bag at night for the next day might be necessary.
1. Revision handbooks are available for examination courses from school supply shops. Many condense courses into key points. These can help the pupil who has difficulty in reading and understanding the main text to make his/her own notes.
1. For the pupil who has difficulty writing answers at sufficient length, parents might discuss a plan or mind map.
1. Self-esteem is so important that parents should continue to foster its development through extra curricular activities, community activities or familial and friend relationships.

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