



## As a primary teacher, how can I prepare students for transition to post-primary?

- [FAQ](#) [1]

The transition from primary to post-primary can be a stressful event for all students and their parents, and this can be compounded when the child has special educational needs. The need for flexibility in accommodating this transition, especially when the student has a special need, is noted in the [Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum \(PDF - 2.35 MB\)](#) [2]. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), in its [Guidelines for the Teaching of Students with General Learning Disabilities](#) [3], also notes the importance of communication, consultation and consolidation during this transition.

To minimise potential difficulties that may accompany the move to post-primary, transition planning should at the very least begin early in sixth class. Taking such measures as outlined below can minimise students' anxiety and ease their difficulties around the transition period.

### Tips for Transition – Suggestions for Primary Schools

- Teach the students how to read school timetables and get samples from post-primary schools – this can be done within whole class maths lessons
- Give the class different due dates for certain pieces of homework in order to prepare them for a more complex timetable
- Consider colour coding copies and books. For example, place a red sticker on the edges of the Maths book and Maths copy, blue on English, etc. This strategy can facilitate organisational skills.
- Teach key words for specific subjects such as Home Economics, Metalwork (Materials and Technology), Business Studies, etc. This can be done within the oral language strand of the English curriculum.
- Integrate transition activities into the SPHE programme. For example, teach students about post-primary school, dealing with change, etc
- Attend open evenings in the post-primary school. This is a good opportunity to take photographs of rooms, etc. These can be used to familiarise the student with the school prior to entry.
- Identify key personnel in the post-primary school and explain their roles to the student: e.g. class tutor, year head, chaplain, guidance counsellor, etc.
- Model and practice recording homework in a journal at the end of lessons as opposed to the end of the school day
- Encourage parents to inform the post-primary school as soon as possible in relation to their child's SEN, as resource hours and assistive technology may need to be reapplied for by the receiving school
- Be prepared for the post-primary school to make enquiries once the student has enrolled.
- Have a 'Leaving Ceremony' on the last day in sixth class – this is a clear signal to the students that they are moving on

## As a post-primary teacher, how can I best facilitate the transition of students with special needs into my school?

The transition process can be facilitated by activities carried out by the post-primary school prior to the student's

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induction and through on-going support after induction.

### Tips for Transition – Suggestions for Post-Primary Schools

- Organise meetings and open days for parents, students and the staff of the feeder schools. These may not necessarily be on the same day
- Ensure that parents know how to best relay information about the child to the school – e.g. the individual whom they should talk to – and assure them that such communication is welcome
- Liaise with feeder primary schools and gather as much relevant, up-to-date information from the appropriate partners to facilitate the application for suitable resources as early as possible. Resources do not automatically transfer and it is important to note that parental consent is required to access and use professional reports that may be needed for such applications. The need for this kind of communication and consultation is noted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in its Guidelines for the Teaching of Students with General Learning Disabilities.
- Provide information packs which give details on subject curricula, extra-curricular activities, resources, school procedures, etc. Consider having a simplified version for students and another version for parents
- Explain the various professional roles to the primary school staff, parents and students, along with any relevant procedures – for example, the roles of the year head, class tutor, SEN coordinator, special needs assistant, etc.
- Have specific induction activities during the first week after enrolment
- Consider having a mentoring system whereby for example older students take some responsibility for first years within the induction week
- Consider how entrance assessments may have to be modified to take into account specific student needs. For example, find out if the student is used to the assistance of an SNA to complete tasks
- Name badges for teachers can be very useful for first year students in the first few weeks
- Provide opportunities for subject teachers to learn about specific needs and establish a formalised system for the dissemination of appropriate information to teachers
- Don't make assumptions about a student's understanding of the school and clearly explain both school and class organisation – e.g.
  - Explain how to read timetables
  - Explain and model how to record homework in a journal
  - Explain about lockers, canteen and other such day-to-day organisational issues
  - Colour coding of timetables and books will assist organisational skills
- Have a 'Beginning Ceremony' which focuses on the positives of being in the new school
- Be watchful for new diagnoses
- Ensure there is a clear and effective anti-bullying policy in place and that students understand the process
- Consider a range of 'taster' subjects to be offered during first year

Further information on transition from primary to post-primary can be viewed in the post-primary 'Guidelines' related to the inclusion of students with SEN which can be downloaded [here](#)

## How can we best formalise transition procedures in our Admissions Policy, so as to facilitate the inclusion of the students and conform to current legislation?

A school's admissions policy ought to be in line with current legislation: e.g. [the Education Act \(1998\)\(PDF - 170 KB\)](#) [4], the [Equal Status Act \(2000\)\(PDF - 111 KB\)](#) [5] and the Education (Welfare) Act (2000). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has a booklet entitled [Schools and the Equal Status Act \(PDF - 221 KB\)](#) [6] which is available to download here and may be of use. Post-primary schools might also seek advice from the local [School Development Planning Initiative](#) [7] (SDPI) co-ordinator. For primary schools, the equivalent service is the [Primary Professional Development Service](#) [8] (PPDS) service,

## Should the management of a student's transition feature in an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

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The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) established a working group to examine Individual Education Plans and has sent a booklet entitled [Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process to schools \(PDF - 1.7 MB\)](#) [9]. This publication can be accessed here and contains templates and examples relevant to transition.

## How do I ensure that the student receives similar resources and supports in post-primary school as he or she did in primary?

It is important for schools to note that resources do not automatically transfer from primary to post-primary and that new applications may need to be made by the receiving post-primary school. [The National Council for Special Education](#) [10](NCSE) deals with resource allocation and more information is available on the NCSE website. Schools may also wish to consult with the relevant [Special Education Needs Organiser \(SENO\)\(PDF - 202 KB\)](#) [11], details can be accessed here.

## Will an exemption from the study of Irish transfer with the student from primary to post-primary?

The eligibility grounds for exemption from the study of Irish are very specific and set out in [Circular 12/96 \(PDF - 144 KB\)](#) [12] and [Circular M10/94 \(PDF - 92 KB\)](#) [13]. An exemption, if granted under circular 12/96, may continue to be granted under the terms of circular letter M10/94 in post-primary. Specific queries should be directed to the DES.

## I am a Principal – how should I manage information on students with SEN that I receive on transition, vis-à-vis data protection legislation?

Schools should act in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts (1998 and 2003) in relation to the management of information on individual students. An advisory notice was sent to schools by the Department of Education and Science in 2003 informing them of their obligations under this legislation and advised that a written data protection policy should be put in place. The Data Protection Commissioner has produced [A Guide for Data Controllers \(PDF - 109 KB\)](#) [14] and an informal guide to the data protection legislation which can be viewed here.

## As a post-primary teacher I want to be familiar with the curriculum that prospective students have studied at primary level – where can I access the revised primary curriculum?

If you are interested in looking at either the primary or post-primary curricula, these can all be accessed through the Introduction NCCA website.

## Where can I access books and resources that relate to transition?

There are a number of books and resources that relate to the transition from primary to post-primary, some of which are referenced below:

- Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland and National Parents Council (2001) *Introducing your Second Level School*, Ireland: ASTI and NPC. This publication can be downloaded here.
- Blackrock Education Centre (2007) *Movin' on Up: Easing the Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School*, Dun Laoghaire: Blackrock Education Centre
- City of Galway VEC (1998) *OK! Lets Go ...!*, Galway: Galway VEC
- Cowling, A. and Vine, P. (2001) *Bridging the Circle, Transition through Quality Circle Time: Lesson Plans for*

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years 6 and 7, Wiltshire: Heron Press

Down's Syndrome Association (2005) Secondary Transfer Guidance, Hertfordshire: Hertfordshire Children's Fund

Speechmark, Moving On Up! Surviving School Transition for 10- to 12-Year-Olds Speechmark

Measor, L. and Fleetham, M. (2005) Moving to Secondary School : Advice and Activities to Support Transition , Network Educational Press: Stafford

Rees, L. (2007) At Sixes and Sevens: The Self-help Guide for Transition from Primary to Secondary Education, Inverness: Script Publishing

Smyth, E., McCoy, S. and Darmody, M. (2004) Moving Up: The Experiences of First-Year Students in Post-Primary Education, Dublin: The Liffey Press in association with the ESRI

Snedden, F. and Whithorn, S. (2004) Moving Up ... Ready or Not: Primary to Secondary Transition Resource, Blackburn: Educational Printing Services Limited

Starting High School: Orientation Activities for New Students, UserFriendly Resources (Printed and distributed by [Outside the Box, www.otb.ie](http://www.otb.ie) [15])

Software: 99½ Top Tips for Easy Transition and Timetable Maker (both available from [www.transitionsoftware.co.uk](http://www.transitionsoftware.co.uk) [16])

Many Education Centres, in collaboration with SESS, schedule an after school seminar on Transition from Primary to Post-Primary for Pupils with Special Educational Needs. These 2.5 hour seminars are aimed at primary and post-primary teachers and those attending receive a booklet containing sample activities that can be used with students. Contact your local Education Centre for details.



**Address:** SESS, c/o Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Road, Cork **Tel:** 1850 200 884 - **Fax:** 021 425 5647 - **Email:** [info@sess.ie](mailto:info@sess.ie)

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