

## **Transition - Primary to Post-Primary**

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).

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), in its Guidelines for the Teaching of Students with General Learning Disabilities, also notes the importance of communication, consultation and consolidation during this transition.

In 2013 the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published a research report on the experiences of young students with special educational needs (SEN), and their parents, of the move from primary to post primary school - 'A Study of Transition from Primary to Post-primary School for Pupils with Special Educational Needs' [PDF, 536Kb].

DES Circular 0056/2011 - Initial steps in the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy [PDF, 139Kb] - refers to the transferring of assessment information between schools, for example, when pupils move to another primary school or transfer to a post-primary school.

Many primary and post-primary schools already have excellent practices in place to support students at various transitional points. For example, a designated teacher from the post-primary school may visit the primary school to discuss issues and share information around transitioning to post-primary schools. In many instances, a member of the special education needs team and/or year head may contact parents of students with special educational needs prior to transitioning to post-primary school.

Many post-primary schools organise open days for their incoming students and their parents. Providing specific information, including details of the physical layout of schools, teacher roles, timetables, lockers, curriculum, school policies and procedures and extra-curricular activities can be particularly supportive for students with special educational needs. Specific induction activities during the first weeks of term facilitated by peer mentors, are particularly important for students with special educational needs. Organising 'meet and greet' sessions for parents during the first term of first-year provides parents with an important forum to share information and a basis on which to build relationships. Additionally, many schools organise information meetings at the start of the academic year to facilitate the sharing of relevant information regarding each student's special educational needs with subject teachers.

A number of resources are available to support schools in planning for effective transitions.

CHANGING SCHOOLS: Moving from Primary to Post-Primary School Guidelines for Parents/Guardians of Students with Special Educational Needs (NCSE, 2016)

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to make Successful Transitions - Guidelines for Schools (NCSE, 2016)

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a suite of materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post primary schools.

These include

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet for children
- My Child's Profile sheet for parent(s)
- Outline of the Education Passport process

Since the 2014/15 school year, schools are required to use the Education Passport materials detailed above and to forward them to the relevant post-primary school, following confirmation of enrolment, ideally by the end of June (Circular 45/2014).

NEPS have published a series of Guidelines on Transition from Primary to Post-primary

- Transition to Post Primary - School Staff Room Notice (NEPS)
- Transition to Post Primary - Transfer Profile (NEPS) (Transfer profile can be used for all / any young person with additional needs transferring to post primary school, to facilitate the sharing of information between schools.)
- Transition to Post-Primary - Sample Transition Programmes (NEPS) (Sample transfer programmes and workbooks, which can be used to prepare a student with additional needs, including ASD)
- Transition from Primary to Post Primary - Resource Pack (NEPS) (Information pack about transferring a young person with ASD to PP school- resource pack for teachers and parents)

Belonging Plus - Transition and Transfer Programme (NBSS, now NCSE Support Service)

**NCSE Support Service Evening Seminar - '*Transition from Primary to Post-primary for Students with Special Educational Needs: Challenges for the Student and Strategies for the Teacher*'**

This NCSE designed and delivered evening course is run annually and details of the course are available on the SESS website. Availability of the course can found from the Calendar of Events on [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie).

A copy of the presentation can be found here.

### **Transition Booklet**

In association with the course above, NCSE have produced the booklet *Transition from Primary to Post-Primary for Pupils with Special Educational Needs: Challenges for the Pupil and Strategies for the Teacher*.

This contains booklet many strategies which will be helpful for primary and post-primary schools.

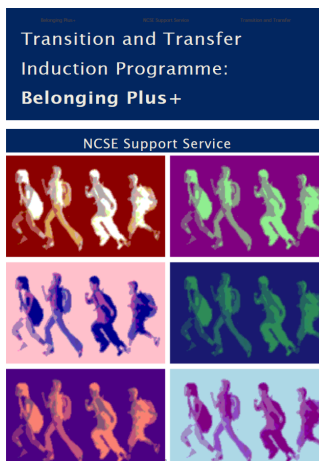
*Transition from Primary to Post-Primary for Pupils with Special Educational Needs*

*Challenges for the Pupil and Strategies for the Teacher*  
*Participants' Booklet*

The NCSE Support Service would like to acknowledge the contribution of Annette Farrell, Special Education Department, St. Patrick's College of Education, Dublin in the design and delivery of the programme and the development of the accompanying resource material.

## Belonging Plus

**Belonging Plus+** is a transition and transfer programme that partner schools implement with incoming first years. The programme is tailored to the specific needs of each school. This resource of sample modules and activities is available to download.



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 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), the Equal Status Act (2000)(PDF - 111 KB) 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) which is available to download [here](#) and may be of use. Schools might also seek advice from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

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

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). 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 (NCSE) deals with resource allocation and more information is available on the NCSE website or from the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO).

## **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) and Circular M10/94 (PDF - 92 KB). 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) 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 NCCA website.

## **What happens to assistive technology equipment when the student transfers?**

Full information on this question is available on Circular 0010/2013 'Scheme of grants towards the purchase of essential assistive technology equipment for pupils with physical or communicative disabilities' [PDF, 3.8Mb]. The following is some of the relevant information from the Circular:

*Although equipment is sanctioned to support a particular pupil, the equipment is sanctioned to a school and will, as a general rule, remain the property of the school and be available for allocation to other or subsequent pupils with similar disabilities.*

*However, some of the equipment which is sanctioned is of a specialist and individualised nature and may not be suitable for other students in the school. In such circumstances it is not efficient that such equipment should be retained in a school, when the student for which the equipment was sanctioned transfers to a new school and would have to be re sanctioned for similar equipment in the new school, at considerable expense.*

*Should the pupil in respect of whom the technology is sanctioned change school, including proceeding to post primary school, the new school, or the school that was sanctioned the technology should consult with the SENO/Visiting Teacher with regard to its transfer with the pupil where it is still appropriate for the pupil's assessed needs. This will ensure that there is no gap in support for the pupil and to enable the pupil to continue to use suitable and familiar resources in their new setting.*

*Retention of technology may be considered where the technology is out of date, it is no longer suitable to the needs of the transferring pupil or there is another child enrolled/enrolling and in respect of whom the school would be applying to the SENO for the same technology.*

*Where the school or the pupil has no further requirement for the equipment, the SENO, or visiting teacher in conjunction with the SENO, may allocate it to another school in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.*

# Linking School Self-Evaluation, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and Junior Cycle Framework

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, School Self-Evaluation and the Junior Cycle Framework are closely related and work together. At the heart of each is a desire to improve learning, teaching and assessment. School Self-Evaluation as a process aims to improve learning, helps schools to implement changes outlined in the Literacy and Numeracy strategy and to prepare for and implement a reformed Junior Cycle curriculum. Interlinking the three aspects of reform will assist in changing not only *what* we teach and assess but *how* we teach and assess to improve learning outcomes.

## Where can I access further resources on Transition?

### SESS Book Borrowing Online

The SESS Book Borrowing Online facility has a section on Transition which can be browsed on the library catalogue

Click here for the Book Borrowing Library and Catalogue

### Other Publications and Resources

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

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