

ncse

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta  
National Council for Special Education

# Starting School



English Version

## Starting School

Starting primary school is an exciting time and a time of change.

Children with special educational needs may need more support to help with the transition to Primary school but most children will settle easily and at their own pace.

The Principal, classroom teachers and other school staff support children and parents at this time.

Most children with additional needs attend mainstream classes in their local school. Mainstream schools have class teachers, special education teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to support children as needed.

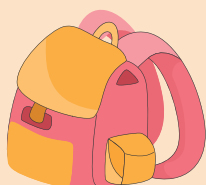
Some children with more complex needs attend special classes in a mainstream school or a special school.

These settings have smaller class sizes with teaching and SNA support.

Students in special classes spend some time in the mainstream classes in line with their strengths and abilities.

Careful preparation with your primary school supports an easier transition. Ideally, this preparation should begin once your child has been offered a school place but it is never too late to start planning.

There are two important steps in planning and preparing for the transition to Primary school.





### **Step 1 is Sharing Information with the school**

Important information might include preschool reports, Mo Scéal reports, professional reports, and perhaps an Access and Inclusion Profile.

With your permission, the primary school can contact the preschool or relevant professionals to help gather this information.

### **Step 2 is Planning with the school**

Planning may involve meetings with parents and students, phone calls or emails.

Planning can involve sharing your hopes for your child's education, their strengths, needs, interests, likes, dislikes and any particular anxieties you or your child have about starting school.

These two steps help to identify the supports required for your child and to develop a student support plan. Supports might include:

- Helping your child get to know the school environment; their classroom, toilets and the playground
- Making changes to the classroom or to the school

- Adapting the curriculum by the classroom and special education teachers
- SNA support for a child with significant care needs
- Assistive Technology such as a Soundfield system for a child with a hearing loss
- Special transport for children attending their nearest special classes or special schools.
- Revising or developing whole school policies.

Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOS) in the NCSE are available to support parents during this time of transition. You can contact your local SENO to discuss your child's Educational Needs.

Moving to primary school is a journey for you and your child. Give time to explore your and your child's thoughts and feelings about the move.

Celebrate their achievements in preschool.

Junior Infants offers lots of opportunities for play and settling in. Talk about what they are excited about in their new primary school.

Many children will be feeling excited going to primary school. It is also normal to have worries about starting school and making changes. Listen to your child, talk about and help them name their feelings.

Pictures, photos, drawing and writing are useful ways to explore thoughts and feelings.

Some ideas that might help you to prepare your child are:

Play school with them at home, practise activities such as jigsaws, drawing and colouring, reading and telling stories.

Encourage and practise independence in toileting, hanging up their coat, taking turns, opening a lunch box, listening and following routine. Some children will continue to need support with these skills throughout Primary School.

If possible, meet up with other children and parents that are starting in that school.

Walk or drive by the school, take photographs of the entrance, yard, teachers and make a booklet to use over the summer.

It is important to get the balance right between preparing children for school and overwhelming them by focusing too much on starting school.

Children need time to be children, to play and enjoy the holidays before they start school.

For more information and for useful contacts, go to this website: <https://ncse.ie/>





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