



Supporting Parents
Supporting Children

EARLY
YEARS



Supporting your child's transition
from Pre-school to Primary School
Hints and Tips

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Your child might be both nervous and excited about starting school. Children often need to see or experience things to fully understand them, so it is helpful to try and explain things about school in a way that can make sense to them.

There is no particular time that you need to start talking to your child about going to primary school. Quite often going to primary school will come up naturally in conversation with your child. However, if it doesn't come up naturally choose a time to talk to your child when you can give them all your attention if they need it and answer any questions they may have.

Research tells us that when children experience a good transition from pre-school to primary school, they will be more successful all the way through their primary school years and beyond. So, it's important to know that good transitions are made up of more than just your child being prepared for school; parents, teachers, schools and communities also play a very important part and need to work together in partnership all the way through a child's education.

Listed below are some everyday hints and tips which may support you to support your child as they transition from pre-school to primary school.

1. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – Getting along with friends and developing relationships and friendships

Friendships and relationships are an important part of school for children and like with our own friendships and relationships as adults we don't always get along with or agree with everything everyone says all the time! That's what makes us all different and interesting. However, being able to accept different opinions, or understand different needs to their own is something that children have to learn, and parents are in the best position to support their children with this.

Help your child develop good communication skills, by reading to them, talking to them, listening to them and asking them about their thoughts, feelings and opinions.

Seeing things from another person's point of view takes practice and is a normal part of your child's development, this is also known as developing empathy. So, whenever the opportunity arises talk to your child about how they are feeling and how you are feeling. If someone has upset them, or if they have upset someone else, a brother or sister

for example, talk about it calmly and come up with suggestions together about how things could have been done differently. When you do this, you are showing your child that their actions and words can affect other people around them. Let them know when you have noticed that they have done something kind that made you or others happy or proud or if they've done something that cheered someone up, such as drawing a nice picture or sharing their toys.

Help your child develop good communication skills, by reading to them, talking to them, listening to them and asking them about their thoughts, feelings and opinions. These everyday experiences can help children form their own views, express themselves, learn new words and learn about other people.

Encouraging and supporting play at home is an excellent and very natural way to help your child develop socially. Play is a time when children can test out things they have learned or try out ideas and language they have seen and heard. Through play children learn about and test relationships, they negotiate roles, "you be the teacher and I'll be the child", or "you be the mummy, I'll be the baby".



2. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Language and literacy are an important part of school and involve not just reading and writing but also being able to hold conversations and express thoughts and feelings. You can support your child's development by making language and literacy enjoyable, it doesn't have to be serious school work! Read stories together and have a chat afterwards, find out what your child remembers or enjoyed about the story. Visit the local library together, play eye spy games.

Read stories together and have a chat afterwards, find out what your child remembers or enjoyed about the story.

When as parents we spend time with our children doing these types of activities, we are not only helping our children grow and learn but we are also creating a connection between feeling loved and secure and reading and listening to stories. This supports children to develop a natural love for reading and learning both at home and at school.

3. INDEPENDENCE

Going to primary school comes with some independence and responsibility for children. Knowing how to do simple things for themselves like hang up or put on their own coat or open their own lunch box, will support your child to feel confident, capable and self-assured.

In pre-schools children will usually be encouraged to be independent to the best of their ability through daily routines such as putting on their own coat and shoes to go outside or taking out their own lunch boxes at snack time. These tasks take lots of practice, children need to develop the ability and the strength to undo zips and buttons, and even the coordination to line up their foot with a welly boot or shoe! Before children can learn to control things like pens and pencils they need to master control of their bodies. Be patient with your child and resist the urge to do it for them, which is something as parents we can do, particularly if we are in a hurry!

It might take a little longer in the beginning but the sense of achievement your child will feel when they accomplish these skills will be well worth it. They will transition through to school being able to do things for themselves, which will make their day run smoother and help them to feel a sense of control at a time when there are so many new things going on. Each challenge a child overcomes and each achievement for a child no matter how small, will form building blocks for their self-confidence and resilience, which is the ability to bounce back and work through situations and experiences that may be difficult.





Support your child in using the bathroom independently. When in pre-school your child's teacher may assist them in cleaning themselves and dressing, however in school your child will be expected to do this for themselves. Ensure they can pull clothing up and down and wash and dry their hands, and importantly not to be shy about telling their teacher when they want to use the toilet to avoid accidents. If your child sometimes has accidents, then let the teacher know discreetly so you can put a plan in place in case this happens.



Behaviour: Let your child know the type of behaviour that is acceptable in the school. It may be helpful to sit with them and read through the appropriate parts of the school's code of behaviour, discussing it with your child as you go along and discussing what may happen if they do not follow school rules and policy.



4. UNIFORM

Find out if your child's school has a school uniform policy (you can usually find this out from the school website, or by giving them a call). If the school has a uniform policy, then it can be a good idea to bring it with you when you shop as there can be a number of things to remember.

Also have a think about if your child can undo buttons, pull a jumper over their head, pull up a zip on their coat or trousers? If you could practice these skills at home over the summer, it will support your child to become more independent while at school.

Footwear – Learning to tie shoe laces takes time and practice and can be a complicated task for children. If your child cannot yet tie laces then try to find them shoes or runners that have velcro or buckles for example, this will support your child's growing independence.

Recognising their name is an important and useful skill for your child.

Recognising their name is an important and useful skill for your child. In pre-school, your child's pre-school teacher will usually write their name on any art work and give them their own personal space labeled with their name such as coat pegs and cubieholes. Little things like this will help children recognise their own name and set it apart from the names of their friends.

You can support this learning by labeling your child's clothing and uniform, lunch boxes etc. The more they see their name written on things that belong to them the quicker they will learn to identify it.

5. SCHOOL ROUTINE

When your child starts in school some things may change for you also. Start times and finish times will usually be different to pre-school, and it will be important to your child that they arrive and are collected on time each day with the rest of their class. Therefore, it is a good idea to find out the start and finish times of the school day before your child starts in September. This will support you to figure out how you will bring your child to and from school each day, while still meeting any commitments you may have, such as work or college. Roads and public transport around schools can be particularly busy at peak times adding extra time to your journey; sometimes leaving the house five or ten minutes earlier can make a big difference.

Explain to your child when you are leaving that you will be back to collect them.

Explain to your child when you are leaving the school that you will be back to collect them. Children tend to identify more with parts of a routine than an actual time when they are young, so tell them the day is finished after big break or garden time for example and you will collect them then.

Think about whether you need after-school care because of other commitments. Research your options before your child starts school. Ask the pre-school your child attends or the primary school they are going to, some have after school services or may know of some.

It may be helpful to call the school before it closes for the summer to ask about transport options to the school if you do not live within walking distance to the school. This may include public or private bus services (it's important to note that both public and private buses are usually allocated months before school starts in September and places can be limited).

There is a School Bus Transport Primary Scheme, find out more about it here:

<http://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=259>



If your child is getting a bus to and from school, make sure they know where to go when they get off the bus and where to go to get on the bus. Schools sometimes have a procedure in place for this, so check beforehand. Children usually cope well with new routines once they know and understand what is happening.

Having a good routine for your child after school is also something important to think about.

Having a good routine for your child after school is also something important to think about. Having a meal and changing out of their uniform each day (if they wear one) is a good place to start. This way when homework is introduced there is already a routine for it to fit into.

Check your child's bag at the end of each school day for notes from the school until they learn to hand them to you themselves, also have a check for left over lunches!

Inform the school and your child's class teacher about any health issues or allergies, so that appropriate arrangements or care plans can be made to accommodate the child's needs. Ensure your child is also well informed on the nature of any health issue or allergy they may have, including the dos and don'ts.

Bear in mind that at the beginning tears can be a normal part of the day but your child will be fine. However, if the tears are going on for more than a few weeks, it would be a good idea to make an appointment with your child's teacher to figure out a strategy to support your child. If a child doesn't feel safe, secure and happy their ability to learn or remember what they have learned is affected. Ensure the school has your contact details in case they need to contact you regarding any emergency.



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