



*National
Parents Council*

POSTPRIMARY



*Comhairle Náisiúnta
Tuismitheoirí*

IARBHUNOIDEACHAS

Supporting your child's move from Primary to Post Primary school

**National Parents Council Primary
and
National Parents Council Post Primary**

Transition from Primary to Post Primary

Every year, more than 50,000 children in Ireland move from Primary to Post Primary education. It is a time of many challenges for children and for parents.

For children, changes can be emotional, physical, and academic. They go from being senior in their Primary school to junior in their Post Primary School.

They have to manage a broader range of subjects and subject options, more teachers, more homework, longer school days, new friends, bigger school and very often their parents' anxiety.

For parents their challenges can range from choosing the school that best suits their child's needs, to issues such as subject options, bullying, new relationships, friendships, homework, finance, and their child's anxiety.

Choosing a school for your child

For some parents there is a natural progression to the local Post Primary school in their area.

However the Irish education system allows a measure of choice to parents. The important issue is that parents seek the type of school that will best suit their child's needs and interests.

The second level sector is comprised of Voluntary Secondary Schools, Vocational Schools, Community Colleges and Community and Comprehensive Schools.

It is always advisable for parents to discuss the choice of school with their child and to visit schools and ask any questions they might have to ensure that it is suitable to their child's needs.

Useful websites to gain more information on Post Primary schools are:

- The Department of Education and Skills: www.education.ie
- The National Congress of Catholic Schools Parent Associations: www.cspa.ie
- Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parents Association: www.compasspa.ie
- Federation of Parent Councils in Christian Bros. & other Catholic Secondary Schools: www.fedcbs.ie
- Vocational Schools and Community Colleges - National Parents Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges: www.npavsccl.ie
- Community and Comprehensive Schools - National Parents Association for Community and Comprehensive Schools: www.pacs.ie

Preparing your child for Post Primary School

It is important if possible to prepare your child for the transition from Primary to Post Primary. It is a time of considerable upheaval for the child and can coincide with the onset of puberty, and the possibility of them losing some or all of their friends to other schools. Children at this time also go from having one teacher who knows them well to having eight to ten teachers who only see them for short spells during the day.

To enable your child to make the transition as easy as possible there are a number of things a parent can do. Encourage your child to talk about the school and what the expected changes mean to them.

Most schools now have an open day which allows both parent and child to familiarise themselves with the layout of the school, who's who in the school and an opportunity to meet some of the teachers and to discuss the subject choices the school offers and how to make the best decisions to suit your child's ability. It is important that both parent and children attend these meetings wherever possible.

A guidance counselling service is available to help students through the process of making decisions in terms of education and career but also in personal and social areas. Schools must ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.

Assignment of Pupils to classes

Most second level schools will try to acknowledge and develop the different potentialities and the different kinds of abilities which young people have.

Schools have a number of ways of organising children into classes in line with their school policy. Children may be assigned to one particular class for all subjects in accordance with their results in tests, this is called **streaming**.

Some schools assign children on a **mixed ability** basis to classes. Some schools band, which means that children who have a certain range of abilities are assigned to a group of classes. Many schools also implement a system called **setting**.

This means that groups of children are placed in particular classes for periods so as to have special tuition in certain subjects, usually reading and mathematics. It is useful to know what system the school operates under before your child begins Post Primary so that you can prepare them in advance.

Subject Choice

When your child commences their Post Primary education they will enter a stage referred to as Junior Cycle.

Almost all junior cycle students take courses leading to the Junior Certificate. Over half of schools delay subject selection until the end of first year; others allow students to take shorter 'taster' programmes before making their subject choice.

In a fifth of Post Primary schools, students choose their subjects before or immediately on entry to the school. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) have fact sheets that explain Junior Cert subjects for children and parents. These can be downloaded from their website www.ncca.ie

School Policies

Parents should familiarise themselves with the school policies, particularly the policies on:

- ▶ **The school uniform** - Many schools prescribe a uniform for the pupils. The decision is made in consultation with parents, school staff and the Board of Management in the school and may also include a dress code on hairstyles, and the wearing of jewellery and rings.
- ▶ **Homework** - All schools should have a policy on homework which should be prepared in consultation with parents and children. In general the following guidelines apply:
 - **First year:** An hour and a half
 - **Second year:** One and half hours - two hours
 - **Third year:** Two - three hours
 - **Senior cycle:** Three hours
- ▶ **Code of Behaviour** - Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available a code of behaviour for its students. The code of behaviour enables school authorities to strike an appropriate balance between their duty to maintain an effective learning environment for all and their responsibility to students whose behaviour presents a challenge to the teaching and learning process. The code of behaviour is a key tool in enabling the school authorities to support the learning of every student in the school with parents and students being part of the consultative process.

Parents and pupils are asked to read, sign and adhere to the code of behaviour policy.

Home / School communication

Each Post Primary school has established policies on home school communication. They outline the role and function of designated personnel in the school.

People you might meet in Post Primary School

The Class Tutor is a teacher who undertakes the role of caring for a class group. The tutor usually stays with the class throughout their time in school. The tutor sets a high priority on promoting class spirit, knowing students individually and also promotes learning at every level. The tutor teaches a Social, Personal and Health Education programme to the class, for one class period per week.

The Year Head has responsibility for the care, development and behaviour of the students in a particular year group. S/he tries to ensure that each student's needs are addressed and that each student achieves to the best of his/her ability. S/he monitors the attendance, punctuality and academic progress of the group and also enforces school rules as outlined in the disciplinary code. The Year Head liaises with parents and other appropriate personnel such as Class Teacher, Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator, Tutor etc.

Home School Community Liaison Coordinator - In 2006 the Home, School Community Liaison scheme was set up to promote active co-operation between home, school and community agencies in rural and urban disadvantaged areas. The role of the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator is to encourage parents to support and enhance their children's education and to assist parents in developing their own skills and education for this purpose.

The Chaplain's role is to help students with their faith development. The Chaplain teaches religion in the class and also talks to small groups of students about what is going on in their faith lives.

Parent – Teacher meetings

Parent-Teacher meetings usually happen in Post Primary in the first school term (end of October - early November). These meetings are completely different to the parent-teacher meetings parents are used to in Primary school. In Post Primary parents can meet up to fifteen teachers to discuss their child's progress. This will include their Class Tutor and the Year Head. Parents will need to familiarise themselves with the names of all of the teachers and the subjects they teach. It is a good idea to have talked to your child about this before the parent-teacher meetings to ensure you get to see everyone you need to.

Training for Parents

National Parents Council Primary deliver sessions for parents whose children are about to or have made the transition from Primary to Post Primary education. These sessions can be held in your school.

For further information please contact National Parents Council Primary, Training and Development Unit Tel: 01-8874475 / 01-8874481 or email: training@npc.ie, information is also available online at www.npc.ie



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