Family Transition

Resource Pack

Early Years Services to Primary School

AMBITIONS FOR TRANSITIONS:

Tips for parents
to support every childs progression

TERM 1

As a parent you play the LEADING role in helping to prepare your child for school.

As the people who know, love and care for your child in a way that nobody else can, you are their biggest security blanket. You can help them to feel more confident and enthusiastic about the changes ahead.

Starting school is not just about the first day in September. It's a process that begins from your child's very first days. From birth, they are ready to learn. They know that you will meet their needs and comfort them when they cry. Their little brains are growing and every interaction and emotion your baby experiences helps that growth. Everyday, you are helping to build the strong foundations for their future.

Think about the changes (or what we call the 'transitions') that you have supported your child through so far. You saw them transform from crawler to walker as they took their first steps. You talked them through the move from cot to bed. You hugged and reassured them through the transition from being with you all of the time, to being cared for by somebody else - whether a minder, crèche or preschool. Naturally then, when it comes to preparing for school, you are your child's best source of support and reassurance.

In addition to your own instincts and experiences, there are many things that you can do to support the transition to primary school. This booklet provides a range of useful tips and activity ideas, as well as a calendar, to guide you through the process. The resources have been carefully developed from discussions with children, parents, Early Years Practitioners and primary school teachers in your local community.

As you can see, we're big believers that it takes a village to raise a child!

Young children learn and develop best through play. This guide is full of ideas for play-based activities you can do with your child to help them with the move to school. At every stage of the process, there are many ways you can plan and prepare for the new challenges ahead.

The guide begins with some tips on choosing a primary school. It then provides some fun play-based activities you can do with your child to help prepare them to attend school. It finishes with tips on useful things to do once school starts. The calendar provides a quick and easy-to-follow reminder of what to do and when to do it.

Remember that you know your child best. Some children feel most confident with a lot of preparation whereas, for others, too much may be overwhelming.

Simply do what you always do - what works best for YOUR child.

TERM 1

Parent's calendar

Term One of Preschool: September to December

- Ask Early Years Practioners if they feel your child has any specific needs that you need to factor in when planning for their primary school education.
- Consider your options when selecting your child's primary school.
- Register your child in primary school of your choice if you have not already done so.

Term Two: January to Easter

- Practise simple self-care skills, toileting, washing hands, blowing nose etc.
- Meet Early Years Practioners to discuss your child's move to primary school.

Term Three: Easter to June

- Get to know the school.
- Attend school Open/Information days.
- Talk to your child and discuss any concerns, hopes, and ideas they have about school.

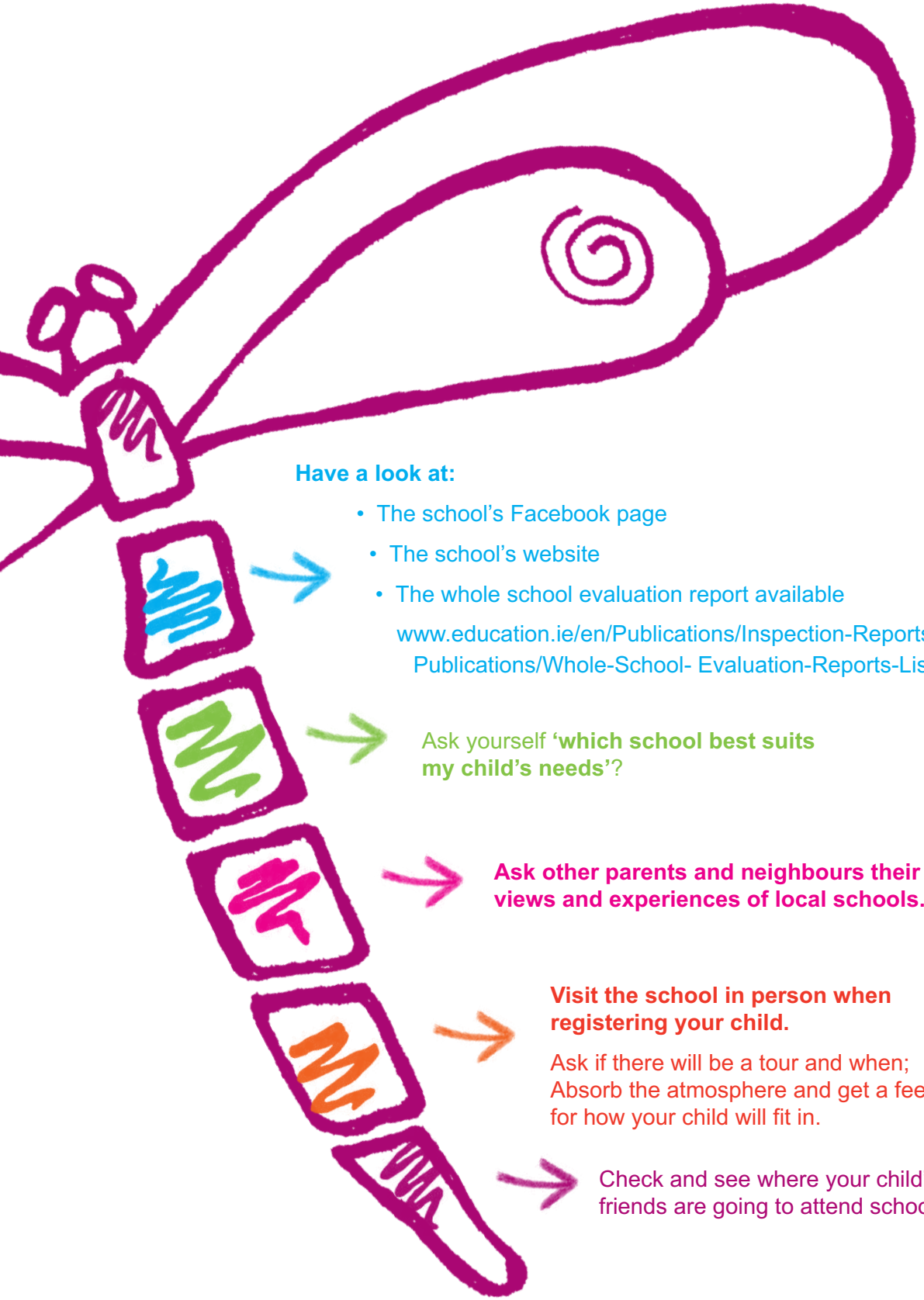
Over the Summer Holidays

- Talk positively about school.
- Take a trip to the library to get a book about starting school. It's free to join your local library.
- Establish simple routines that will help when school starts, such as brushing teeth, putting on coat etc.
- Write your child's name on school bag, books, coat, uniform etc.
- Consider your child's skill level when getting items for school.
  Will they be able to open their bag and pencil case by themselves?
  Can they put on and take off their own shoes?

You might find this calendar useful, for the year before your child starts school.

TERM 1

Tips on choosing a primary school



Have a look at:

- The school's Facebook page
- The school's website
- The whole school evaluation report available

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School- Evaluation-Reports-List/

Ask yourself **'which school best suits my child's needs'**?

Ask other parents and neighbours their views and experiences of local schools.

Visit the school in person when registering your child.

Ask if there will be a tour and when; Absorb the atmosphere and get a feel for how your child will fit in.

Check and see where your child's friends are going to attend school.

TERM 1

Questions to help you gauge if your child is ready to begin primary school

The key areas of maturity and development are the social and emotional areas Your child does not need to be able to do all of these but they will help them settle into the school environment and routines.

	Yes	No
1 Can your child make an independent decision and follow through on this?	◯	◯
2 Does your child have ideas of their own?	◯	◯
3 Can your child listen to and follow two or three instructions at the same time?	◯	◯
4 Can your child move on to new activities easily?	◯	◯
5 Does your child separate well from you or their carer?	◯	◯
6 Does your child show interest in other children?	◯	◯
7 Does your child interact with other children?	◯	◯
8 Can your child recognise and express their feelings and needs?	◯	◯
9 Can your child concentrate on a task? Play alone for a period of time?	◯	◯

10 How does your child deal with frustration?

If you have concerns having completed the questions above, have a chat with your Early Years Practitioner.

Reference: Kidspot. Is you child ready to start school? www.kidspot.com.au/school/preschool/school-readiness/is-your-child-ready-to-start-school/news-story/e8012a59de9e80fb4074db65f35c89e3. Accessed 17/11/17

TERM 2

Preparing to attend school

Getting to know the school day routine

There are many ways you can help your child become familiar with their new setting and what will be expected of them at school. Have a chat with the preschool staff or other carers and ask their opinion on how they feel your child will transition into primary school. Early Years Practitioners have extensive experience and should be able to give you some concrete advice. They also know your child's likes, dislikes and little routines. If you have any concerns or worries about your child the preschool can access extra support through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Programme while in preschool:

www.aim.gov.ie/for-parents/

Fostering independence

It is important to encourage your child to do small jobs and chores for themselves. We call these 'self care' skills. There are four main types of these skills:

- Self-feeding
- Independent dressing
- Toileting
- Keeping track of their own items.

You can start developing these skills in a fun, play-based way and slowly build up your child's skills and confidence over time. When the time comes that you are picking out things your child will use at school, be sure to consider your child's skill level. For example: Velcro or strap shoes, zipped pencil cases and easy open and close lunch boxes.

TERM 2

Self-Care Skills for 4 and 5 year-olds that will make school life easier

Dress independently

Pay particular attention to being able to:

- pull up and down trousers and tights
- putting on and off shoes, coat, hat, scarf and gloves
- practice using snaps, zippers and buttons.

Hygiene and toileting

Your child will need to be able to use the toilet themselves independently.

This means:

- wiping and cleaning themselves
- washing their hands and
- flushing the toilet when they are finished.

Sneezing, coughing and blowing their nose are skills that children are developing and building on all the time.

Self feeding

Many schools provide school lunches but your child will need to be able to:

- serve themselves
- open their bag/box
- lay out their food themselves
- open water bottles
- insert a straw into their carton
- clean up after they have eaten
- tidy away any rubbish and
- mop up any little spills.

Do simple tasks

Keep track of their belongings, e.g. coat, hat, scarf and gloves

Be able to:

- take books, copies and pencils out of their bags and
- put them all away when finished.

Follow a set of two or three instructions.

An example:

'when you have finished your colouring, please put your crayons back in the box and give me your page.'

TERM 2

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF FUN ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO PREPARE FOR STARTING SCHOOL

Play games where your child packs and unpacks the school bag they will be using. Make it fun by making up a rhyme about it or singing a song. Something as simple as *'open up, in it goes. Use the zip, it's time to close'* can work wonders!

Help your child to practice serving themselves lunch and helping with the clean up. For example, you may like to set up a pretend picnic in the backyard or park.

Play games where people have to raise their hand to say something and wait for their turn to participate. All members of the family could practise it over dinner as they talk about their day.

Tell positive stories about your time in school. Children love to hear stories about your school days. Try to focus on the positive and be optimistic. For example, talk about your favourite teacher, things you had fun doing or great friends you made.

Role play self-care tasks such as eating or dressing with teddy bears. Doing it on others will help your child to learn. *'Oh look, teddy needs to get ready. Let's help him button his cardigan and put on his shoes.'*

Tidy up toys and books when finished with them. This helps your child to understand that another activity begins after the previous one is finished and tidied away.

Take opportunities as they arise to sing rhymes and read stories together.

When you label their belongings show them to your child so they can recognise the labels and easily identify what belongs to them.

Not all children can recognise their name before they start school and that's absolutely fine.

When using public toilets, explain that there are separate toilets for girls and boys, just like there will be in school.

Remember that working on these skills doesn't stop on the first day of school. **We know developmentally that children develop these skills at different stages** and can sometimes forget some skills that we know they have. They are easily distracted by the newness of school so try to give them space to adjust. Children develop these skills in partnership with caring adults and they still need support, even when we think they have mastered them. For example, children are still only grasping how to share and take turns up to the age of seven.

TERM 2

Additional Resources for Parents

1

Going to Big School Tips for Parents

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Early-Childhood_Going-to-Big-School.pdf

2

Kids Matter Videos and Information on Getting Ready for School

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/early-childhood/starting-school-resources/1-thinking-about-transition-school

3

Transition to School Family Resources

www.ecia-nsw.org.au/tts-content/families

4

Your Child in Primary School Tips for Parents from the INTO

www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/TipsforParents/2017_Tips_Eng.pdf

TERM 3

Getting to Know Your School

1. Try to attend as many information sessions and open days as possible.

2. Bring your child with you so they get opportunities to spend time in the school.

3. If you have any questions, write them down. This often makes them easier to ask.

4. Link with families you know, who have children already attending the school. This helps you to gather further information, and will provide a familiar face for your child when they start.

5. Take opportunities to give the school as much information as possible about your child.

TERM 3

Tips for Parents from Parents who have experience of the transition process

Tips for Parents from Parents

Take up the opportunities to visit the school and talk about all interactions with the school

Encourage your child by reassuring them that all will be ok

Speak positively about the school

Try on the uniform a few times over the summer

Get into a routine early on, so you're all ready – not shell shocked – in September

Give the school as much information as possible when filling out the enrollment form

Visit the school as much as you can beforehand

Don't hang around for too long on the first morning as they may cling to you and it could unsettle them

If you have any problems or concerns go straight to the teacher

Attend every course/activity that is offered in the school

Walk past the school – familiarise your child with their new route and with the building

Encourage stories from older kids about your child's new school

Meet the class teacher before they begin

Keep encouraging your child and stay positive when talking about school

Find out from the start the best way to communicate with your child's teacher

TERM 3

Tips for the teacher about your child

I live with...

My favourite game is...
I like to play quiet games/
I like to play running games

Foods I like/
foods I don't like

Things I am good at/
things I like a bit of help with

Things that sometimes upset me...
loud noises...
changes in routine...

I like parties and plenty of activity/
I don't like noise

When I get upset I like... a hug...
a little quiet time...
to be on my own...
to be distracted...
a treat

I love chatting/
I find it hard to talk

I'm happy to go to the toilet in preschool/ I have difficulty with the toilet

I like to play alone/
I like to play with others

I like to get messy/
I don't like to get messy

Things my new teacher might like to know about me...

1

2

3

4

5

My name is

I am yrs of age

SUMMER 4

Try out the following routines in the weeks leading up to starting school:

Set a regular bedtime routine that will allow your child to wake up fresh and ready for the day.

Practise the morning routine of getting up early, having breakfast together, putting on your child's uniform and packing their school bag.

Practise the After School Routine for taking off your school uniform and checking the bag for homework and notes.

Walk or drive past the school so your child will become familiar with the route and the area.

Try going at the usual school drop-off and pick-up times as this will help you and your child get to know what to expect (e.g. how busy the traffic will be, which route to take etc.).

Getting used to changes in your daily routine can help build a child's sense of security and reduce stress.

SUMMER 4

Once School Starts

First Day Tips

Have school bag, clothes, water bottles and anything else needed in the morning ready the night before.

Eat a good breakfast together. Try not to rush but instead, sit together and chat about the day ahead.

Try and give yourself an extra few minutes so you arrive in the school yard or classroom before the bell rings.
This will give your child time to adjust to the activity of the yard or classroom while you are there as a support. Once your child has settled it is best to leave promptly.

Likewise, make sure that you are there to collect on time everyday so your child is secure in the knowledge that you will be there and that you won't forget them
or be late.

If you are finding it hard to get information about your child's day in school try asking a specific question.
Instead of *'how was your day'*, maybe ask *'were you sitting beside James again today?' 'Have you had a chance to use your new crayons yet?'* These tend to be easier to answer than general questions and don't put your child under pressure to remember everything that happened.

Tips on settling in to school life

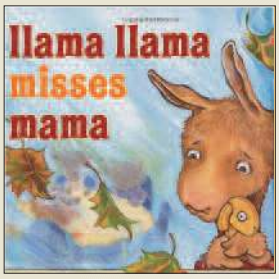
Stay in contact with the school. Try to attend anything you are invited to in the school or send someone in your place, such as Little Voices sessions, 'book start', transitions meeting etc.

If there are significant events happening at home, these will have an impact on your child. Children are very sensitive to the anxieties and stresses that happen in every home from time to time. It could be as major as a family bereavement or house move, or as small as a new family pet. If it's a big talking point with your child, it's worth letting teachers know what's happening. This will give them the information they need to be able to support your child through any of life's changes.

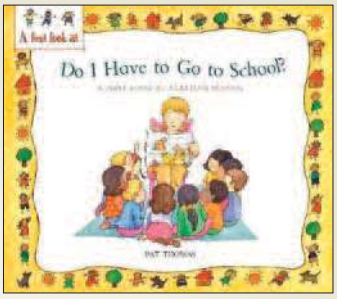
SUMMER 4

There are lots of choice when it comes to books about starting school.

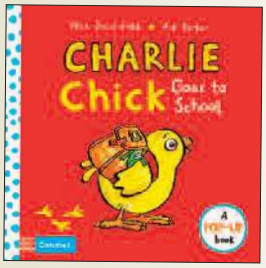
To help you get started here is a small selection that you might like to choose from.



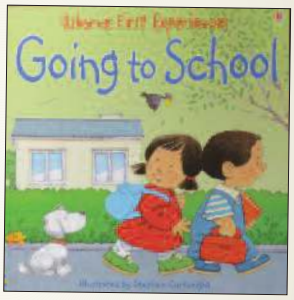
Llama Llama Misses Mama
by Anna Dewdney



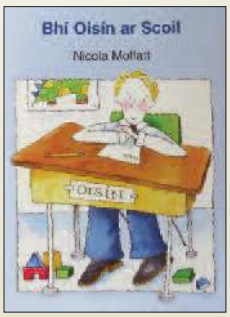
Starting School:
Do I Have to Go to School
by Pat Thomas



Charlie Chick Goes to School
by Nick Denchfield



Going to School
by Usborne First Experience



Bhí Oisín ar Scoil
by Nicola Maffatt

Come to School too,
Blue Kangaroo!
by Emma Chichester Clark