

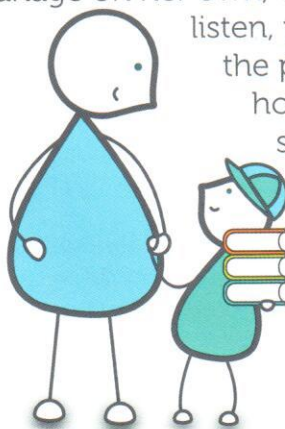


'Going to Big School'

Making the Transition from Early Education to Primary Education Tips for Parents

Every year thousands of children move from pre-school to primary school. Pre-school starts preparing children for the 'Big School' transition from early on. Many children find starting "Big School" exciting and have little trouble with the changes that it brings, while others can find this time stressful. It's a time of great excitement and new beginnings for the child and their parents, saying goodbye to preschool, meeting new teachers and making new friends.

For children the primary school buildings are bigger with more rooms, more children, more adults and more rules. Those first days at school can be an anxious time for parents who wonder, will she manage on her own, will he make friends, will he be able to sit and listen, will she be able for the school yard? Often it's the parent who gets a bit overwhelmed and has to hold back the tears as their child takes this next step on life's journey.



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Preparing your child for school

Preparing your child to start school will help them feel more confident, and enable them to fit in to the school community.

- Link in with your child's pre-school to know how they are planning for children's transition to school and check what you can do at home to help them get off to a good start
- Be positive – every parent has their own experiences of school, some positive and some negative. But it is important to remember that children learn from their parents. It is important to talk positively to your child about what they can expect at their new school and what your school days were like.
- Visit the school, it's a great idea. Most schools have Open Days and it is a good opportunity for you and your child to:
 - Be familiar with the layout of the school – 'I know how to get there.'
 - See the classroom – 'I see where I will be.'
 - Meet the teacher who will be teaching your child – 'I know who my teacher is.'

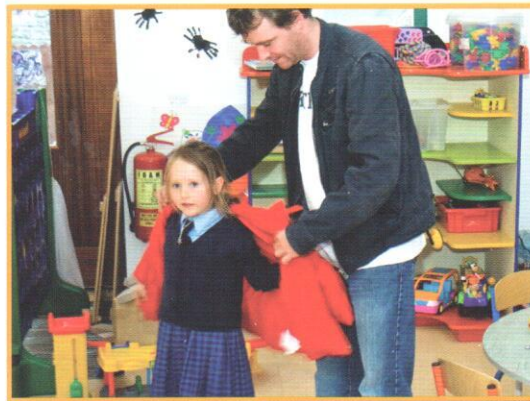


- Chat about school as a place to meet new people and make friends. Describe the new opportunities that school might bring – different activities and experiences.
- Encourage your child to ask questions, express ideas and feelings about starting school
- Allow your child to do things independently at home. Encourage confidence by allowing them to do simple jobs or tasks as part of the family and to develop self-help skills (dressing, toileting, washing).
- Talk about going on the school bus and let them see it in action (if appropriate)
- Avoid stress by getting book list, uniforms and school bags organised early in the summer

Being confident that the school is ready for your child

You know your child best. It is important that you share relevant information with the teacher who will be with your child for four to five hours a day on a constant basis. Let the teacher know:

- What your child is good at, what he likes and dislikes
- If your child has any special health needs and how they can be managed
- If there are any issues outside school that may be troubling your child (bereavement, separation, moving house)
- Who may collect your child



Settling your child

Just like preschool, preparing your child to start primary school will help them feel at ease in a new place. It will prepare them to be more confident in managing on their own and support them in the knowledge that they will be collected at the end of the day.

Ensure your child is aware of what will happen on her first day at school. Arrive in good time on the first day. Don't arrive too early as waiting around can raise anxieties. Take direction from the school and arrive at the requested time. This will give your child time to look around the classroom, meet the teacher, and maybe recognise some familiar faces.

First Day Tips

- Have clothes, uniform and shoes clean and ready
- Eat a good breakfast – learning requires energy and enthusiasm
- Have your child's name on all their belongings – they will be confident in recognising their own name
- Have their lunch and/or healthy snacks ready along with the easy to open lunch box
- Know your route to the school – if time or distance allows why not walk
- On reaching the door, smile and talk with the teacher in a friendly way. Relax and don't fuss and let your child know that you're confident that they can manage. Remember that your child is alert to the emotional messages you send out, so don't panic and don't let the child see you crying. (If they do, explain that you are crying because this is a happy day).
- Help your child find a seat and hang up their coat. In a new situation, your child may want to hold onto their school bag or put it down beside their chair.
- Support your child to connect with other children around the table with a simple 'hello'. Let your child know when you are leaving and assure her you will be back to collect her at the end of the school day.
- If your child is fine going in on the first day, just walk away and don't look for problems where none exist. The majority of children will sail in, no problem. Treat yourself to a cup of coffee and a little treat – this is a big day for you too!
- If your child does cry going in, follow the lead of the teacher. Often children who come in the door crying are okay and laughing five minutes later. Rest assured that if your child is not settling the teacher will contact you.
- Make sure to return for pick up on time as children can fret when they see other children leave before them
- Make sure you are not under time constraints in those first few days. It may take a few minutes to help them settle in – so make sure you have that flexibility. It is important that your child doesn't feel pressurised or hurried.
- Don't expect the teacher to give you detailed feedback in the first two weeks when the whole group is really settling in. If there is any problem teacher will let you know.
- Ensure your child gets enough sleep and has a good balanced diet – new routines make extra demands on children



Supporting your child through school

Building positive relationships with the school

Children benefit enormously when their parents work closely with the teachers. It is important that you establish and build a positive home/school relationship.

Getting to know other parents

Parents can benefit from the support of other parents in many ways. You may know some parents already through your child's preschool journey but new connections can develop through conversations outside the classroom door, or at parent's evenings in the school. Joining the Parents Association in your child's school is a great way of meeting other parents.

Listening to and talking with your child

Talk regularly to your child about their expectations and experiences of school. Talk about what they are doing and playing but don't pester. Talk to them about their friends. Encourage them to do their best, affirm their efforts, celebrate their success and display the work they bring home. By listening, you will be able to tune into fears or worries, as well as notice interests and strengths.

Being involved in your child's learning

As the parent, you are the child's most important teacher in life. Once your child starts school the most important thing you can do is to get involved in your child's learning. Your involvement says that the school life of your child is important and that you value their learning. At a practical level, this means you ensure your child attends school regularly and on time with the correct equipment and appropriately dressed. This shows the child that their parents value and respect the learning in schools.

Get Involved - Stay Involved

Get involved and stay involved in your child's education and school. By keeping in touch with what is happening, you also help shape and influence how the school works. Your child will benefit by your involvement.



Learning through Play

Children learn through play. Pre-schools and some infant classes in primary schools have begun to share a new curriculum framework, Aistear (which means 'journey') that recognises the importance of play in young children's learning.

Engaging in play is good for children's health and well-being. It is a way of creating community so that children develop a sense of identity and belonging. It is a way of **communicating** and **exploring** and **thinking**. These, Aistear tells us, are the most important learning outcomes in early childhood and these foundations are laid down in play.

Play is important in children's lives. In pre-school your child probably enjoyed good play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Play should also be a feature of the school day and as such should help in providing seamless continuation for your child.

To play children need:

- People who help them to play
- Places to play
- Equipment and materials to help develop the play

Play is enjoyable for young children and play helps them to make connections in their learning. Through play children explore and discover, developing their natural creativity and curiosity. Play helps children make connections, friends and to develop their social skills, reading skills, thinking skills, writing skills, and maths skills to name a few. By playing, a child learns how to recognise numbers and count, how to sort and match things, how to recognise letters and words, shapes and symbols, how to plan, how to decide, concentrate and use their memory.

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