



Department of
Education
and Training

TRANSITION

Gearing up for secondary school



A guide for parents/carers of children starting secondary school

From the Director General



As a parent/carer you have helped your child adjust to many new and sometimes challenging situations. Your child may need your support again as they move from primary school to secondary school. Simply being prepared can make a big difference to how well we cope with change and, for most children, help to be organised is all that is needed.

This booklet has practical tips to help your child prepare for and manage the first few weeks at their new school. Tips such as taking a map of the campus, wearing the uniform and making friends can help your child feel relaxed, confident and able to take this change in their stride.

Skilled staff will welcome your child and help them settle in quickly. If your child is geared up for the first day at their new school, this change can be a very exciting time.

I wish your child a happy and smooth transition to this next phase in their lives and hope they enjoy the variety of new opportunities that secondary school provides.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "O'Neill".

Sharyn O'Neill
Director General

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What is transition?

Transition is the time of change in your child's education when they move from primary to secondary school. Staff at both your primary and secondary school are very keen to make the transition a comfortable, happy time for your child and will help them prepare for and become familiar with the new campus and daily routines.

In many secondary schools older students take the role of peer leaders to help new students settle in. They may act as guides offering advice, re-assurance and answering questions from new students. Check to see if your school has peer leaders.

You, too, can help your child adjust smoothly to the changes by being prepared and informed.



Staff help make transition a happy, exciting time.

Orientation

Your child may have had the chance to visit the secondary school during their final term at primary school for a guided tour of the campus.

Often students can try some sample lessons – such as science or drama. These opportunities help your child get to know the secondary school and feel more relaxed about starting at the new campus. If your child did not go on an orientation day, contact the school and you may be able to arrange a tour for both of you together.

Secondary school is quite different from primary school, especially because students move between rooms for different lessons and may have several teachers each day. Read the information sent from the school such as the handbook and talk about it with your child. If you need further information, contact the school.

A big campus might be confusing and the school map will be very helpful for those first few days. Your child will adapt more easily to the new routines if they know what to expect so check and talk about the differences in break times, rules and expectations of the school.

Secondary schools offer many new and exciting opportunities including academic subjects, vocational training courses and specialist sport programs. Your child will benefit from the wide variety of subjects offered.



Whet your appetite for something different.

Parent information forums

You might like to visit the school yourself to get to know the campus too. If you are familiar with the school, its programs and teachers, it is easier to chat at home together about your child's day.

Many schools offer parent information forums which can be very useful and informative. These are also good opportunities to find out what is happening with other parents and their children.

Know your child's ability

Understand your child's strengths and weaknesses. Help your child choose subjects that are suited to their ability. Try to strike a balance between pursuing interests (perhaps drama or information technology), trying new things (maybe woodwork or media studies) and what you would like or expect them to study.

Be aware that peer pressure, fear of failure and following a dream might be factors in selecting subjects that are either too easy or too hard for your child. They may want, or be pressured, to be in classes with their friends and you can help advise and guide while still allowing them an important part of the final decision.



Things you can do to help your child

Most importantly, be prepared!

If your child will use **public transport** to and from school, get the timetable and do a trial run before school starts to be sure of times and stops. Make sure your child is ready in plenty of time to catch the bus or train, especially on the first day. Have a plan in place in case your child misses their transport.

Simple things like wearing the right **uniform** can make a big difference to how comfortable your child feels on day one. Find out when the uniform shop is open and get the uniform well before school starts. Don't forget the physical education uniform and find out which day/s it is needed. Clearly name your child's clothes.

Make sure to get the required **books** and/or stationery so your child is ready on the first day. Name everything so lost property does not become an issue your child has to deal with.



Wearing the uniform
says we belong.

Find out about the homework expectations of the school. If your child's school provides a diary, check it daily to be aware of homework, assignments and general communications from the year coordinator and subject teachers. You can also use it to write messages to the teachers.



Talk about bullying, peer pressure and risky behaviour. Risky behaviour means doing anything that could put your child at risk in some way. Participating in activities such as riding without a helmet, daring others or acting out a dare and showing off put your child at risk. Make sure your child knows where to find the **year coordinator** or **student services** in case they need help or advice.

Know the team of skilled staff who can support your child and you. The grid on the tear-off flap at the back of this booklet may be useful to fill in and keep handy for quick, easy reference.

A copy of your child's daily timetable will help your child be prepared for each day with the required homework, equipment or sports gear.



On the first day



Catching up with friends before school.

Make sure your child goes to school well prepared for the day by:

- being well rested after eight or nine hours sleep
- having a good breakfast
- wearing uniform (jewellery is restricted in many schools)
- arriving in plenty of time
- knowing where to meet friends inside the school grounds
- knowing where to assemble
- taking a file, organised into sections, notepaper and pencil case
- taking healthy food for morning recess and lunch
- having all belongings clearly named
- arranging a clear pick-up time and place.

Be calm and reassuring

It will help your child feel more at ease if you are calm. Listen to any last minute concerns and talk about them before seeing your child off for the day. After school, talk about their day, the campus, their teachers, their new subjects and friends.

Reassure your child that it's OK if it takes a little while to adjust to the changes and feel settled.

Making friends

Talk about meeting new people, making friends and getting to know the teachers and other students as soon as possible – without rushing.

This is especially important if your child is enrolled at an 'out of area' secondary school because there may not be any other students from their primary school for company.

The best way to make friends is to be friendly. Here are some tips for your child:

- Speak to other students.
 - Introduce yourself and ask questions about topics such as sport or music.
 - Be positive and talk about good things.
 - Find out about clubs/activities at the school and join one that interests you. You will have something in common with the other members.
- Be helpful if you see someone looking lost or sad.
 - Join in. Don't hang back hoping someone will talk with you – they might think you are not interested.
 - Ask what classes they have next and if they're going in the same direction.
 - Listen to what others are talking about and then join in, without taking over.
 - Try to remember one or two names each day. Write them in your diary if that helps.



Making friends through common interests.

Responsibility and independence

Plan an out-of-school routine with your child that promotes a balanced lifestyle.

You can help your child set up a quiet area for study in your home away from distractions.

Making a study timetable early in the year will help your child finish assignments by the due date and be ready for tests.

Successful students agree that consistent work throughout the year, rather than last minute 'cramming', is a key to success.

For overall success as well as your child's wellbeing, study needs to be balanced with recreation, friends and a healthy diet. Research shows that a healthy breakfast is a very important start to every day – not cool drink and chips on the way to school!

Plenty of sleep is also very important for growing bodies.



Help your child get into a routine and become responsible about being organised for school. This includes:

- planning a homework schedule and doing homework each day
- completing assignments before or by the due date
- taking the sports uniform on sports days
- having permission slips signed when due
- setting up a sensible filing system so time is not wasted searching for things before a lesson (label file dividers for each subject and have spare paper in each section).

Your child can successfully manage assignments if they:

- know the due date
- check they understand the task
- know the format required
- do the research
- write, edit and re-write
- include a bibliography if applicable
- hand them in on time.



Set up a homework routine.

What to do if you are concerned about your child

Talk with your child privately and ask about the problem.

Call the school – sooner rather than later.

Arrange a meeting if necessary to discuss any issues with the year coordinator or a staff member at student services.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, contact the school and work together to address the issue. Here are some tips that may help your child deal with the situation.

- Tell the bully to stop or ignore the behaviour and walk away.
- Show that it doesn't upset you.
- Talk with friends, family and teachers. Bullying thrives on silence.
- Don't be afraid of being called a 'dobber'. Know the difference between 'dobbing' and being assertive and taking control.
- If you say nothing you are actually protecting the bully.
- Remember that bullying is about response and audience. Give an assertive response and avoid an audience situation where lots of people are standing around watching.
- Some areas are high risk. Avoid these before, during and after school.



Good friends – great support.

Communication with the school

Always keep the school advised of information that is helpful for the school and contributes to the wellbeing of your child, such as:

- strengths/talents/weaknesses
- major commitments that impact on study time or attendance
- conditions such as allergies, dyslexia, ADHD
- illness
- living arrangements such as sharing between households (extra newsletter if required), family splits, parent/carers travelling or working away
- change of address or telephone number
- major illness or situations within the family or close friends
- court orders.

ALWAYS read the newsletter. Know when it is sent home and ask to see it. Keep up to date with what is coming up and, if necessary, help your child be prepared and equipped. It may help to have a timetable on the fridge.

Offer to help out at the school canteen or the uniform shop if you can.

Join the Parents & Citizens' Association or School Council (which is made up of parents and teachers) and be involved in decisions that affect the education of your child.



Keeping up with the school news.

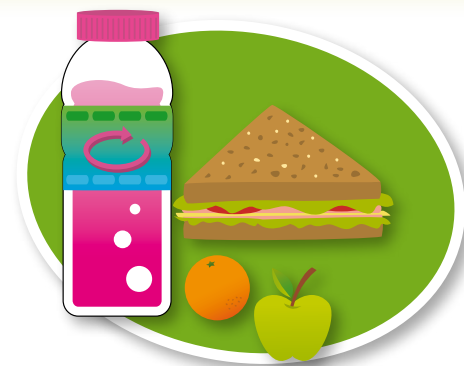
Questions often asked by new students

These are some questions frequently asked by new students. You can help your child be prepared by talking about these and any others that your child may have.



- *Where are the toilets?* Look at the school map together and point out the toilet blocks, especially in the area/s where they will be having classes.
- *What time do I have to be at school?* When and how long are recess and lunch breaks? When does school finish? Check the school's handbook.
- *What will I do if I get lost?* In a big school this is not uncommon in the first day or so, but easily fixed. Stay calm and ask for directions.
- *Am I allowed to have a mobile telephone, pager or iPod at school?* Check with the school about its policies on the use of electronic devices. If in doubt, leave them at home because if valuable items are lost it is very distressing.
- *What do I do if I am absent or late?* If your child is going to be away, contact the school as soon as possible. If your child will just be late, check with the office, student services or the handbook in case a late note is needed.

- ***How do I order my lunch?*** If you don't know the school canteen procedures, consider sending a healthy lunch and morning snack from home until you find out.
- ***Where do I leave my bicycle when I get to school?*** Find out where bikes can be safely left during the day. You will need a chain to lock the bike to one of the racks.
- ***How will I know when each session ends?*** Check with the school and, if a siren is not used, make sure your child wears a watch to school.
- ***Do I have a locker?*** This varies so check with the school. If your child has special needs, contact the year coordinator as early as possible to make arrangements.
- ***What do I do if I feel I need help for any reason?*** Go straight to the year coordinator, student services, reception or deputy principal and talk with one of the people who are there especially to help – no matter what the problem is. Try to make sure your child knows where to go to find these people/places.
- ***What do I do if I need to leave school early?*** Your child should check with student services and fill in the required form.



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Fill this in and keep it handy for quick reference.

Position	Name	Contact number
Year coordinator		
Program manager		
Youth worker		
Nurse		
Chaplain		
School psychologist		
AIEO		
English		
Mathematics		
Science		
Society & Environment		
LOTE		
Technology & Enterprise		
Health & Physical Education		
The Arts		

School timetable



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS	RECESS
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH