

# Adapting and Managing Transitions in the DEIS context



The transition from one school level to another is recognised as a very important time in children's lives. A social gradient in the cognitive and non-cognitive skills and capacities children possess before school entry reflects broader social inequalities in the cultural, financial, and social resources possessed by families. As such, **transitions** is a central theme in DEIS action planning for improvement and well supported educational transitions are linked to positive educational outcomes.

At primary level, when parents engage in a range of activities such as visiting the school, meeting members of the school community and talking about the school to their children, it bodes well for positive learning experiences. Recent policy initiatives have emphasised the importance of ensuring a continuity of learning experience over the transition from preschool to primary school (*NCCA, 2018*). Effective communication between early years providers and primary teachers about the kinds of skills and dispositions acquired by children before starting school is essential to ensure that schools are adequately prepared and equipped to deal with individual needs of pupils. Communication between parents and teachers is also a crucial element to support the children's transition and allow them to settle more quickly into their new school setting. Regular communication between parents and teachers at the initial stage of pupils' primary school journey offers the potential for schools to further involve parents in supporting their children's learning.

Similarly, the transition from primary school to post-primary school is a major landmark in young people's lives, moving to a new school involving exposure to new teachers and ways of learning, as well as a new peer group. The *Growing Up in Ireland* survey (2017) reported that at least one fifth of young people were anxious about making new friends and missing members of their familiar primary school community. This transition is more nuanced for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who have a more difficult experience. The involvement of parents (through attending parent-teacher meetings or school events) was associated with fewer problems and the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Teacher plays a central role in supporting an effective transition.

The Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education hosted an online event in April 2021 to showcase some of the excellent work of DEIS schools in facilitating and supporting the successful transition from early years to primary, through post-primary and onto further and higher education. The inspiring presentations delivered by teachers, students, and parents of their experiences with transitions served to underline the value of carefully planned, supported passages from one educational setting to another. The principal and HSCL teacher from Marymount National School in Drogheda, County Louth shared their positive routines in shaping smooth early years transitions for pupils in their school community. Staff members from Mount Sion CBS in Waterford revealed some of their good practice in enabling an uncomplicated transition to post-primary school with a focus on young people with English as an Additional Language. St Paul's Community College, also in County Waterford, also feature in the webinar offering constructive guidance on how to achieve successful transitions from primary to post-primary school.

A recording of the event has been made available [here](#) and will provide a useful opportunity for principals and teachers in DEIS settings to gain an insight into good practice in other schools and consider how some of the approaches and resources described may be applied in their own school environment. The schools involved also demonstrated great innovation and adaptability in responding to the enforced changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic and their creativity in managing effective transitions during this challenging period is admirable.

In response to the high level of interest in this event, the Department of Education has added a new section to the Gov.ie website to accommodate resources specifically relevant to DEIS schools which will be grouped by DEIS theme and added to over time. (The website can be accessed [here](#).)