



## Guidance for Parents/Guardians for Children Moving from 6th Class during COVID-19 School Closure

Since schools have been closed due to the public health measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) you, as parents/guardians, have had to adapt to support your children as they continue to learn at home. Final term activities such as sports days and school tours have not been possible during these last few weeks in primary school for your 6th class child. Also the usual preparation for moving to post-primary school and school events to mark this important move, have been affected. Many schools have marked this important life event for your child in creative ways as they move to post primary. Also, all primary schools have completed a Pupil Passport for every 6<sup>th</sup> class student as they prepare to leave their primary school and move to post primary.

In addition to the help you have been given by your child's primary school, here are some ways in which you can try to support your child during this time of change.

### 1. Feeling Safe

Most children will be feeling excited and happy to be moving to post-primary school, as well as feeling a little sad about leaving their primary school, teachers and friends. Some may be feeling a little worried about the move. Children feel less worried when they feel safe. The less worried we are, the more we are able to think, plan and learn. The following may help your child to feel safe, and less worried:

- **Routines:** Having a healthy routine will help.
- **It's good to talk:** Have a chat with your child about the things that they are looking forward to, and what the good things about moving on from primary school will be. Talk about any worries they might have, and try to help figure out ways to deal with these.
- **Reassurance:** Remind your child that the post-primary school is planning to make sure that all students and teachers will be as safe as possible by following the Government/ HSE advice.
- **Check-in:** Have a look at the post-primary school website over the summer months to get up-to-date information about the safety measures that will be in place in when the school opens. When information is available, talk to your child about what to expect when going to school after the summer break.





## 2. Feeling Calm

Some students will be worried about the move to post-primary. Your own calmness during this time will help your child to relax. The following can also help them to feel calm:



- **Ideas:** Remind your child of things we all do to deal with our worries and stay calm. Breathing deeply, thinking about positive things, getting enough sleep, eating healthily and getting exercise will help. See [here](#) and [here](#) for some more ideas about relaxing and staying calm.
- **Remind:** Encourage your child to think about the things they have done in the past that helped them when they were worried.
- **Show:** Let your child know that lots of children their age find leaving primary and moving on to post-primary school difficult for a while. It is important that you are positive and calm; your child will pick up on how you are feeling.

## 3. Feeling able to manage

When we believe that we can deal with challenges and handle tough times, we feel better. When we believe that we are supported by others, we also feel better. As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, some children may feel a lack of control and feel unable to solve problems and handle ordinary day-to-day challenges. The following may help:

- **It's normal:** Your child may feel sad that they missed out on the usual end of year ceremonies to mark leaving primary school. This is normal.
- **Talk:** Talk to your child about their time in primary school; what were the highlights, best experiences, proudest achievements and important things that they learned?
- **Discuss:** Talk to your child about a time when they were strong or helped others in the past, to show their strengths and coping skills. Discuss what they have learned about themselves during this time.
- **Remind** your child that they will probably know other students in the post-primary school. Maybe ask one of these e.g. a neighbour's child, a cousin, to talk to your child about what to expect, etc.
- **Plan:** If your child is going to a different school to their friends, talk to them about making new friends, and how to keep in touch with their primary school friends.
- **Connect:** It is important that your child knows who they can speak to in their new school if they have a worry. The school website and communication from the school will usually provide you with this information.
- **Read:** Have a read through NEPS [Organisational Tips](#) with your child.



## 4. Feeling Connected

Building connections for your child with the new school will support their wellbeing and their readiness to learn when they start school. The following can help your child to feel connected to the school:



I am part of my class and school. I have a voice and I am listened to



- **Encourage:** Ask your child would they like to **write/draw/create** a goodbye messages to their principal, teacher(s), other school staff, friends etc. Your child could write/draw/ create a message to their future self which you can put in a sealed envelope and give to them in a year's time.
- **Highlight** that they will make new friends in the new school.
- **Connect:** Encourage your child to stay in touch with friends over the summer months (taking into account government and health guidelines). These connections are important if they are stressed or worried.
- **Encourage** your child to watch [President Higgins' message](#) to all 6th class students.
- **Find out** if there is a buddy system available in the post-primary school (check the school website for information) and, if available, discuss it with your child.
- **Support:** Making new friends can be a concern for some students as they move to post-primary school. Talk to you child about this and practice conversations to support your child around how to make and maintain new friendships.

## 5. Feeling Hopeful

Hope can help us cope and bounce back when things are challenging. Hope may also include believing that others will be there to help. The following can promote a sense of hope:



Being in school helps me reach my goals



- **Think Positive:** As a parent you can let your child know that moving to post-primary is exciting and that they have lots of things to look forward to - new friends, new subjects, new experiences - but also let them know how brave they are in the way they are handling this difficult situation.
- **Talk:** Talk to them about their strengths and interests and how they will use these in their new school.



- **Celebrate:** Having a family celebration to mark a child finishing primary school can give them pride and a sense of achievement, for example, your child could choose what special meal the family have.

## 6. Getting Support and Information for your child's needs

- Contact the school if you have any queries. Read the [Department of Education's information](#) on keeping children and young people well during Covid-19.
- Look up the post-primary school's website with your child to see videos, photographs and maps of the school and to keep up-to-date with the school news and communications.
- Pupils with additional needs will need more detailed information about what post-primary school will look like and what to expect. Where possible, provide students with a timetable in advance.
- Making new friends is often a concern for students with additional needs as they move to post-primary school. Use social stories and/or role play/modelling to support your child around how to make and maintain new friendships. If your child is attending another service, it may be helpful to talk to them.
- If your child does not have a confirmed place in a post-primary school for September 2020, your primary school can assist you by making contact with or providing contact details for the local Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), or the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) in the NCSE in relation to special class or school placement. The SENO can also ensure that supports (for example, assistive technology, transport etc.) are in place, if needed [NCSE](#).
- If your child has specific needs then communication with their new post-primary school is very important in order to highlight these needs. They will be able to reassure you that supports will be in place in the new school based on your child's identified need(s).
- If appropriate, ask your child what they would like their new school to know about them.
- Look at online transition programmes using [NEPS](#) and [NCSE](#) resources.