

Supporting the transition to primary school in 2020 (Part 1)

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The approach of summer usually brings transitions to our minds as we think of the children in preschool and their families finishing their time with us and moving to primary school in September. However, the transition this year will be different as children have been unable to

benefit from being in their preschool in recent months due to the COVID-19 situation. Yet life and learning are still going on and in the Autumn we will all be trying to manage and support the transition back into our preschools and schools. In this article, I want to recap on some of the Mo Scéal materials that are available online that might be helpful to you in this particular year of children's transition to school. I also want to give you some ideas for sharing with parents as I know many of you are continuing to support children and families remotely through the use of technology.

Mo Scéal reporting templates

As you might know, the NCCA developed the Mo Scéal reporting templates in partnership with practitioners and teachers. These can support children transitioning



from preschool to primary school. Even though children have been unable to attend preschools over the past few months there is still a lot of valuable information that can be shared with parents through a Mo Scéal report. If your preschool is considering generating reports for the children transitioning to primary school this year, it may be worth suggesting that parents share them with the new school in the autumn and draw their attention to the parent section too. From parents' experiences at home over the past couple of months, they will have lots to share with their child's new teacher, for example, their child's favourite stories, special interests that they have like farming or playing with blocks, things they find difficult like making new friends or needing to be reminded to go to the toilet. These nuggets of information will be invaluable to teachers. Don't forget to tell parents about the child section too. This will give children a voice in the transition and they can share a photo, a piece of artwork or a special message with their new teacher.

Supporting transitions is a shared responsibility

Supporting transitions is a shared responsibility between children, families, communities, preschools and primary schools. The concept of child 'readiness' that dominated in the past has been replaced with a broader approach that considers the child, family, preschool and community on one hand and 'ready-schools' on the other. The development of stronger relationships between preschools and schools is key. Parents play a vital role too in the transition and this year, due to our changed circumstances, they are playing a particularly important role.

Skills and dispositions that support the transition to school

We know from research that there are certain skills and dispositions that children need as they move to primary school. In the case of 2020, parents will play an even greater role in encouraging these skills and dispositions. Children benefit from having good oral language/communication and social skills as well as developing





[positive learning dispositions](#) like independence, curiosity and resilience. Activities and routines at home over the next few months can support children to develop these. Children will benefit from having opportunities to:

- be independent, especially in caring for themselves (dressing, toileting, washing hands) and their belongings (clothes, toys, books). Children can also help out in activities such as recycling, setting the table, putting away shopping, sweeping.
- create things themselves through using open-ended play props like boxes, paper, crayons, paint, brushes, scissors, sticky tape.
- talk, communicate and play, for example, talking to a parent about their play or what they're making or drawing.
- develop social skills, such as being able to take turns, to negotiate, resolve conflicts and

problem-solve. For example, if the bridge keeps collapsing parents can encourage the child to think of ways to solve the problem rather than jumping in to fix it.

- learn to persevere when things don't go as they had planned, for example, if a child is struggling to climb onto a low wall or beam and looks like giving up, parents can encourage them to keep going.

develop good physical skills. Have a look at the [tip sheet on fundamental movements](#) which has some suggested activities for jumping, skipping, throwing and catching, balancing that can be done indoors as well as outdoors (while practicing social distancing). You might like to share some of these with parents.

Even though children are not in preschool at present, play remains a very important part of their lives and it might be helpful to recap on this for parents. Elizabeth Wood, Professor of Education at Sheffield University highlights key messages for parents in this [video](#) reminding us that play and talk are 'fundamental in driving children's learning'. There are [tip sheets](#) available too that help parents to understand the importance of play. You know the children and parents from your setting best and what might be most helpful to them currently.

In the two to three weeks before children begin to return to school there are lots of activities that can be undertaken by families to help them prepare for the move to junior infants. I will share these in 'Supporting the transition to primary school in 2020 (Part 2)' in August. Until then stay safe and enjoy the sunshine!

If you would like to learn more about these resources please go to [Mo Sceal](#) or to the [Aistear Síolta Practice Guide](#)

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