



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta  
National Council for Special Education

# Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to make Successful Transitions

Guidelines for Schools  
NCSE 2016



# Introduction

These guidelines are intended to assist schools to support students with special educational needs to make successful transitions. All students can be anxious at transitional points, but we know, from experience and research findings, that students with special educational needs can have particular difficulties with transitions. Many of these students rely on being in familiar surroundings with people they know and trust and on routines that are predictable and stable. Parents and families also report increased anxiety and uncertainty at these times as they struggle to assist their children to make transitions.

Many schools have now excellent practices in place to support students at various transitional points – preschool to primary, primary to post-primary, moving between special and mainstream settings or simply changing schools because of moving house. These guidelines are intended to share this good practice so that more students with special educational needs, and their families, can be supported to make transitions with greater confidence and ease.

The NCSE has also published guidelines for parents on supporting their children with special educational needs at important transitional points. These guidelines are available on the NCSE website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

The word 'parent' in this document should be taken to include guardians of children.

# Guidelines for Schools

Schools with good practice in supporting successful transitions have in place:



## **Enrolment policies that:**

- ▶ Welcome all students, irrespective of need.
- ▶ Have early application processes to facilitate school planning in areas such as additional teacher training, adaptations to school buildings, applications for additional teaching or care supports, special transport, assistive technology and so on.

- ▶ Allow for exceptional circumstances where a student has to move to their school mid-year.

### **Good links with parents and feeder schools that:**

- ▶ Recognise the student and his/her parents are the key people involved in planning the transition.
- ▶ Assist the transfer of relevant information for students to enable:
  - ▶ Schools to build a picture of the student's learning abilities and needs.
  - ▶ Planning to take place for necessary additional supports and/or any environmental adaptations required such as adapted furniture, ramps, hoists.

### **Transition plans that:**

- ▶ Are prepared well in advance of transition.
- ▶ Are informed by and discussed with parents, student, previous school and as relevant, other external professionals involved with the student, for example, health therapists, NEPS psychologists, NCSE Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), relevant school staff, and so on.
- ▶ Take into account the following aspects of the student's education:
  - ▶ Parents and students' hopes, expectations, ambitions, concerns, as appropriate.
  - ▶ Inclusive assessment.
  - ▶ Supports necessary for inclusion, e.g. resource teaching, visiting teacher service, SNA, assistive technology, reasonable accommodations.
  - ▶ Any social and/or communication needs and/or sensory needs.
  - ▶ Any significant care needs arising from the student's disability, for example, toileting, mobility, medication, dressing, eating.



- ▶ Are individualised with clear, measurable targets that specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address students' needs during transition.
- ▶ Allow information about students' learning and care needs to be circulated to relevant new teachers so that all can differentiate/adapt their lessons, as necessary.
- ▶ Nominate a key person that parents may contact should any queries or difficulties arise for their child in school.

**Clear and simple transition booklets that explain:**

- ▶ How the school works, for example, school calendar, map showing the lay-out of the school, student's school timetable and so on.
- ▶ Who's who in the school for example – principal, student's teachers, including any learning support or resource teachers, class tutor, guidance counsellor, SNAs, school secretary, caretaker and so on.
- ▶ Subject options.



- ▶ School rules and uniform (including what is needed for PE) and taking into account the needs of students with special educational needs.
- ▶ What students need for their first week in post-primary school.

Some schools produce transition booklets with photographs or in video format to ease the transition for students who need visual supports and/or for parents to use during the holidays to familiarise the student with his/her new school.

**Inclusive practices that support students during transition including:**

- ▶ Open evenings that welcome all prospective students and their parents.
- ▶ School visits that help students become familiar with the layout of the school, the frequency and sound of bells, the location of lockers, the noise and movement when classes end and what happens at break times.
- ▶ Help, as necessary, to choose subjects, locate classrooms, manage timetables and so on.
- ▶ Ongoing support offered in a sensitive and age appropriate manner, during and after transition.

### Post-school transition planning that:

- ▶ Begins two years in advance of student leaving school.
- ▶ Is informed by the school's guidance counsellor or resource teacher to help the student make suitable choices and plans for the future.
- ▶ Informs students about their strengths and learning needs.
- ▶ Ensures students and where appropriate, parents are involved in decisions about transition.
- ▶ Provides information on a number of post-school options that may be available or relevant.



## Questions for Schools to Consider

**Does the date for confirmation of enrolment allow adequate planning time for students with special educational needs?**

**Have initial meetings with parents and students taken place?**

**Has the school all the information it requires to enrol the student?**

**Has the school requested all relevant professional reports/documentation and have they been forwarded by parents?**

**Will parents have a link person to contact in the school if/when the need arises?**

**Have feeder primary schools or preschools been contacted, where necessary?**

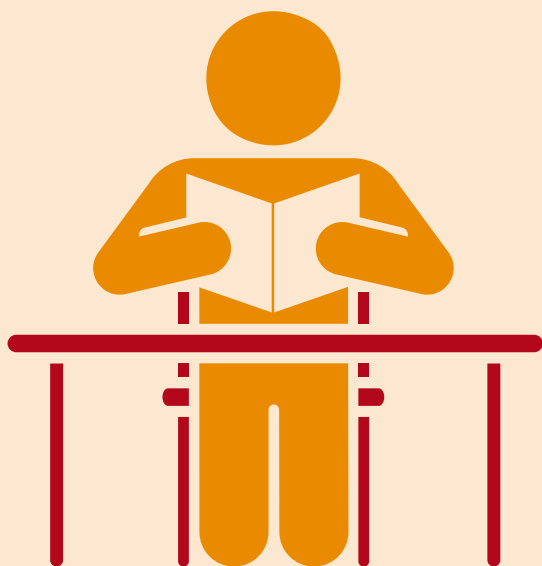
**Have relevant health professionals involved in supporting the student been contacted, where appropriate?**

**Does teacher continuing professional development or further staff development need to be considered?**

**Does the school's physical environment need adaptation?**

**Have all the necessary applications for supports been made in sufficient time?**





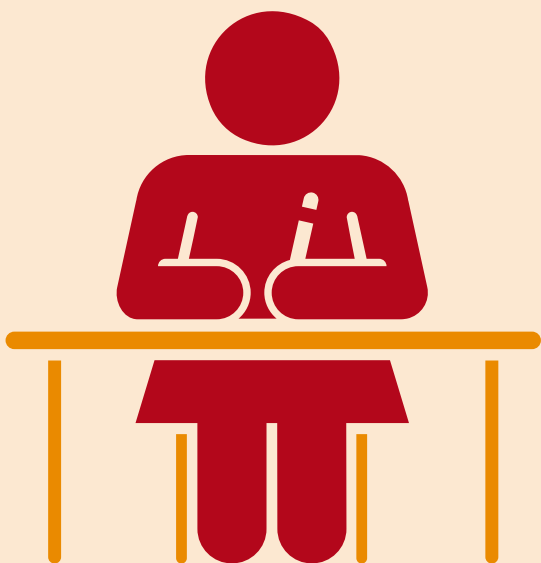
# Resources to Assist Schools

## National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS):

- ▶ A transfer profile to share information between primary and post-primary schools.
- ▶ An information pack for the transfer of information to post-primary school.
- ▶ Sample transfer programmes and workbooks to prepare students for the move.

Materials are available at:

[www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/  
National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/  
NEPS-Guidelines-Handouts-and-Tips/Transition-to-  
Post-Primary-School-Staff-Room-Notice.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guidelines-Handouts-and-Tips/Transition-to-Post-Primary-School-Staff-Room-Notice.pdf)



**National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA):**

- ▶ An Education Passport to provide information about an individual's achievements which should help to inform differentiated planning, available at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)

**Special Education Support Service (SESS):**

- ▶ A transition booklet that includes useful strategies for familiarising students with the post-primary routine and learning how the school works, available at: [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)

**National Council for Special Education (NCSE):**

- ▶ A booklet on Post-School Education and Training Information on Options for Adults and School Leavers with Disabilities, available at: [www.ncse.ie/information-booklets-pamphlets-2](http://www.ncse.ie/information-booklets-pamphlets-2)

# Useful Reference for Schools

1. A Study of Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (2013).  
Yvonne Barnes-Holmes et al.  
[http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Transitions\\_23\\_03\\_13.pdf](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Transitions_23_03_13.pdf)
2. What Works in the Provision of Higher, Further and Continuing Education, Training and Rehabilitation for Adults with Disabilities? A Review of the Literature (2013).  
Carmel Duggan and Michael Byrne  
[http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report\\_15\\_Adult\\_Ed\\_09\\_04\\_14.pdf](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report_15_Adult_Ed_09_04_14.pdf)
3. Moving to Further and Higher Education: An Exploration of the Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs (2013).  
Conor Mc Guckin, Michael Shevlin, Sheena Bell and Cristina Devecchi  
[http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report\\_14\\_Higher\\_Ed\\_09\\_04\\_14.pdf](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report_14_Higher_Ed_09_04_14.pdf)

# Material

4. HSE/DES Framework for Collaborative Working between Education and Health Professionals.

This document outlines actions necessary to ensure adequate planning and co-ordination of the transition processes.

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

5. ESRI/NCCA – Study by ESRI/NCCA examines the experiences of students in their first year at post-primary school.

Moving Up: The Experiences of First Year Students in Post-Primary Education (2004).

<http://www.ncca.ie>

6. NCCA – Overview of reporting policy and practice in primary schools across jurisdictions.

Reporting Children's Progress in Primary School (2006).

<http://www.nvwwwvcca.ie>