

NEXT STEPS

Moving on to Secondary School

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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Forbairt Áitiúil Loch Garman



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Next Steps – moving on to secondary school

Moving from Primary to Secondary School is a big milestone for young people. For many it marks the end of a comfortable and familiar school life and the beginning of something entirely new, something bigger. Children who are nearing the end of 6th class have to come to terms with the idea of finishing up and moving on. Change can be a challenge but it also brings new opportunities. With a small bit of planning, preparation, empathy and understanding your child can make a positive and successful switch to second level. This booklet covers some of the things to consider as your child prepares to take the next steps on their learning journey.

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Introduction

Second Level (also known as Post Primary) Education takes place in two stages. These are the Junior cycle for the first 3 years followed by the Senior cycle which can be 2 years or 3 years when Transition year is included.

The new junior cycle combines subjects such as Maths, English, Gaeilge with short courses such as PE, Digital Media, CSP.

Transition year (4th year) follows on from the junior cycle and gives students the chance to experience different learning styles, develop new skills and independence before moving on to the final two years of senior cycle.

The senior cycle finishes with the Leaving Cert which comes in three distinct programmes:

For some students the **Leaving Certificate Established** can lead to an application to third level universities and colleges or to a Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course. Approximately 75% of students in their final year sit the Leaving Cert Established.

The **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme** combines parts of the Leaving Cert with a focus on self-directed learning, enterprise, preparation for work and community. Around 20% of students opt for the Leaving Cert Vocational Programme.

The **Leaving Certificate Applied** is for students who prefer a more practical, vocational style of learning. It aims to prepare students for adult and working life and is more assessment based than the Leaving Cert. Some students move on to a Post Leaving Certificate course once they have completed their Leaving Cert Applied. Around 5% of students opt for Leaving Cert Applied

Some schools have a religious ethos, often Roman Catholic, whilst some do not, for example Vocational Colleges. It is a good idea to check which

school you feel will be most suited to your needs. For example, does it offer the right subjects? What type of Leaving Cert programmes are available? What are the facilities like? Are there extra supports available?

The Secondary Curriculum

One of the good things about second level is the number of subjects on offer. There is a lot more to learn and some subjects may be completely new. First years in some schools generally do more subjects before making a choice about which subjects they want to continue with in second year. New subjects might include Business, Technical Graphics, Home Economics, Woodwork and modern languages such as French, German or Spanish. The new junior cycle has a focus on literacy, numeracy and key skills. It also includes short courses such as CSPE – Civic, Social and Political Education and SPHE – Social, Personal and Health Education.

What's going to change?

Moving from primary school to second level brings many changes. To start with there's the switch from being the senior pupils in school to being the youngest. Suddenly being 12 or 13 doesn't seem that old when you're in the same school as 17-18 year olds. Fortunately many schools use the Meitheal Programme where older pupils (usually 5th or 6th years) help the first years to settle in. There is also the need to get used to the new building, a new timetable with new subjects and lessons around 40 minutes long or sometimes an hour or more. There are new teachers for each subject. Students will be moving around the building from class to class. It's likely to be a much bigger place with a lot more people. The school bag will look and feel different, the school day will be longer and some of the homework might take more time. For some this may seem

scary at first but after a few weeks all of this change should begin to feel familiar. It's also a chance to meet new people, make new friends and learn something new. There is also the possibility of sports activities, drama, music, after school study groups, art, travel and more. So, whilst there will plenty of changes, there is also a great deal to look forward to.

Mindset Matters

With so many changes on the way, it's worth taking time to consider how to respond. How we think about things can affect how we deal with them. Try to avoid falling into a habit of making any negative predictions or presumptions. A 'Fixed Mindset' can be very limiting and can encourage negative ideas such as 'stick with what you know', 'I'm not good at maths' or 'I'm not going to like this'. A 'Growth Mindset' encourages the possibility of doing well with positive ideas such as 'it's good to try something new', 'I can get better at this' and 'I like a challenge'. A growth mindset can help deal with many changes and challenges and it is important to approach moving on to secondary school with an open mind. It's not as simple as saying 'think positive and everything will be ok' but it is about taking a realistic and practical approach. Moving to second level is exciting but it can also be an emotional time. Simply being a teenager can also be both exciting and emotional. So it's ok for your child to not feel ok at times, especially if something goes wrong. Problems however are usually temporary and a growth mindset can help find the solution that will help.

Preparation – What Helps?

Coping skills, resourcefulness, resilience, routine, social skills, adaptability, independence & self-belief. That's a lot to take on board but young people don't always get the credit they deserve for their ability to

deal with challenges and change. Many of them will have already visited their new school and most schools have useful websites or social media that can help give a sense of what to expect. Some may have an older sibling or friend who is already in the school and can give advice on what to expect. It really is 'good to talk' although make sure that your young person is ready and wants to discuss things. Just like starting primary school, starting second level isn't a once off event it's a process. Many schools will have a day in the new term that is just for first years to get used to their new surroundings. Be willing to listen and acknowledge their thoughts and feelings during the transition to second level. Something that may seem small might actually be a big deal to a new first year so make time to talk things over in a calm atmosphere. They can benefit from examples of everyday positive social skills – active listening, empathy, sharing and connecting. Let them see that you are available to listen and help if needed. Balance and boundaries are essential. They should be moving towards greater independence – making their own lunch, organising their school bag etc but they also need clear boundaries and routines. Discuss and agree rules and routines around things like homework, social media and living together as a supportive household. Show appreciation for their efforts to do well at home and at school.

Homework

Homework at second level can be a source of avoidable stress. It is likely to take more than an hour on most evenings. Try to show an empathetic attitude to the workload and an interest in their homework. Try to agree on a quiet space in the house that can be set aside for study and homework without distractions. Encourage and acknowledge effort, help if needed but avoid doing the homework for them. Be supportive around the use of time, reminders can be helpful but getting into a nagging

conflict is not. Help them to find a method that works for them, it may be worth getting the hardest homework done sooner and a regular break or two to re-charge can help. Homework is a fact of secondary school life so the sooner they can get into a positive routine that works the better it will be.

Lingo & People

Post Primary schools have a number of staff with different roles and responsibilities. Some of the roles, subjects and abbreviations to be aware of include:

Principal - the senior staff member with responsibility for leading the school

Deputy Principal – senior staff member who assists the principal. Some schools have more than one Deputy Principal.

Secretary – staff member responsible for dealing with a wide range of school business

Receptionist – the first port of call for enquiries and other school business

Guidance Counsellor – a teacher who offers advice and guidance on education, careers, personal development and personal counselling

Subject Teachers – teachers who specialise in one or more subjects

Year Head – teachers with the added responsibility for a specific year group

SET – Special Education Teacher

SNA - Special Needs Assistant – a member of staff that acts in a caring and supportive role for a child with special educational needs

SENO – Special Educational Needs Organiser

HSCL- Home and School Community Liaison, a teacher with responsibility for building links with home, school and the community

Chaplain – usually in faith based schools the school Chaplain deals with spiritual matters that may be a part of the culture of the school

Meitheal Leader – an older student who helps to welcome new first years into the school

Caretaker / Facilities Manager- staff member responsible for the security and maintenance of the building

BOM - Board of Management, the BOM is responsible for school policies, procedure and governance

Students Council – a group of students that engages with the school and promotes the interests of the students

Parents Council – a voluntary group of parents that links with the school

Admissions Policy – the process and procedures that a school uses to allocate places

Communication Platform – schools use a variety of digital platforms to communicate effectively with parents and guardians

TY – Transition Year, 4th year, the year after the Junior cycle and before the final 2 years of the Leaving Cert cycle

SPHE – Social, Political & Health Education

ESL – English as a Second Language, for many people in Ireland English may not be their first language

CSPE – Civic, Social & Political Education

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

NEPS - National Educational Psychological Service provides advice to schools on learning, behaviour, social & emotional development

BTSCFA – Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a scheme of financial assistance for the cost of uniform etc. To find out more contact mywelfare.ie

Schools in County Wexford

There are 23 Post Primary schools in County Wexford with close to 14,000 students between them. Some schools are multi-denominational, some have a Catholic ethos and all schools aim to be as inclusive as possible. Catholic schools will take pupils from other faith backgrounds and non-faith backgrounds. Here are the schools in Wexford, the student numbers are from school year 2021/2:

Area	School	Ethos	Students (approx.)
Adamstown Y21KO39	Coláiste Abbain	Multi – denominational	370, mixed
Bridgetown Y35R628	Bridgetown College	Multi – denominational	550 mixed
Bunclody Y21FW99	Bunclody Vocational College	Multi – denominational	250 mixed
Bunclody Y21K284	FCJ Bunclody	Catholic, co-educational	1010 mixed
Enniscorthy Y21XW97	Meanscoil Gharman	Multi-denominational	260 mixed
Enniscorthy Y21YX56	Enniscorthy Community College	Multi-denominational	400 mixed
Enniscorthy Y21EF82	Colaiste Bride	Catholic, girls	760 female
Enniscorthy Y21TK35	St. Mary's CBS	Catholic, boys	730 male
Gorey Y25V6Y9	Creagh College	Multi-denominational	980 mixed
Gorey Y25YX29	Gorey Community School	Multi-denominational	1550 mixed
Gorey Y25A7V7	Gorey Educate Together Secondary	Multi-denominational	35 mixed

Kilmuckridge Y25C952	Coláiste an Átha	Multi-denominational	360 mixed
New Ross Y34XR63	St. Mary's Secondary	Catholic girls	650 female
New Ross Y34WR12	CBS Secondary	Catholic, co-ed	400 mixed
New Ross Y34R297	Good Counsel College	Catholic, boys	790 male
New Ross Y34YW08	Kennedy College	Multi-denominational	160 mixed
New Ross Y34FT82	Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary	Catholic girls	240 mixed
Ramsgrange Y34YY17	Ramsgrange Community School	Multi-denominational	550 mixed
Wexford	Loreto Secondary School	Catholic, girls	870 female
Wexford	Presentation Secondary	Catholic, girls	880 female
Wexford	Selskar College	Multi-denominational	390 mixed
Wexford	St. Peter's College	Catholic, boys	780 male
Wexford	Wexford CBS	Catholic, boys	680 male

Additional Needs

For any child with Special Educational Needs it is very important to check the level of support that the school will provide. Schools have a commitment to inclusion and providing education to all students. Some children benefit from additional support from a Special Education Teacher and a Special Needs Assistant. When a child is allocated additional support the details will be set out in their IEP (Individual Education Plan). The IEP needs to transfer with the child to second level

and the new school needs to know about the additional needs before the child transfers. Make sure that there is clear communication between the two schools when the child is in 6th class to ensure that the right supports are available when they transfer to second level.

Health Matters

The Junior Cycle includes topics such as health education and wellness.

Positive mental health is about reaching our potential and feeling like we always have the chance to give everything our best shot. Not just feeling positive, but also getting out there in the big bad world. Positive mental health not only prevents mental ill health, it also leads to greater enjoyment and satisfaction with one's life.

Spunout.ie

For parents and children the move to second level education is a big milestone. There will sometimes be challenges and stresses. Therefore it's important for everyone to remember their 'Healthy 5 a day'

- Connect with others – family & friends
- Be active – a walk, dance, run, sport, gardening
- Take notice – slow down, take a deep breath & appreciate where you are
- Learning is for life – keep learning, a book, a recipe, a craft, a language
- Give – a smile, a compliment, a small act of kindness

Cost

Preparing for secondary school can be expensive. Between books, IT equipment, bags, sports gear, uniform, lunch and transport there is a lot to budget for. Uniforms are costly and you may be entitled to the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BTSCFA). Contact MyWelfare.ie

to find out more – to apply online you will need a PPS card and a MyGov.ie account. Other organisations that may be able to help with the cost include St. Vincent De Paul, Barnardos and the Simon Community. Find out what the options are for lunch, this will vary from school to school.

Remember What You Can Do

By staying calm and supportive there are many ways you can help make the move to second level go smoothly:

- Acknowledge their thoughts and feelings
- Be a good listener – but don't force them to talk
- The 'small stuff' might be big to them
- A safe, calm atmosphere is good for communication
- Show good social skills – active listening, empathy, sharing & connecting
- Balance & boundaries – moving towards greater independence
- Negotiate and agree rules on social media use – a phone switched on in the bedroom at night time is a distraction from sleep
- Early problem solving and conflict resolution
- Affirmation – remind & reassure them about their strengths & skills
- Checklists – uniform, bag, lunch, extras
- Helping them with good habits – routines, food, sleep. They are going to be tired and good sleeping habits are essential
- Preparation – awareness around any additional needs they may have

Taking the Next Steps Positively

Try to maintain a positive outlook as everyone adjusts to the experience of moving to post primary education

- Keeping things in perspective – it's one small step on a much bigger journey, school is not the be all and end all, life is
- There's going to be plenty of days that aren't perfect, it's okay to have a bad day
- Encourage an enjoyment of learning, the value of education and being part of the school community
- *'Nine tenths of education is encouragement'* Anatole France
- *'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'* Nelson Mandela
- *'Teachers open the door but you have to enter by yourself'*
- *'They cannot stop me. I will get my education if it is in the home, school or anyplace'* Malala Yousafzai

Useful Websites

ncse.ie NCSE – National Council for Special Education – a national body that works to improve educational services for people with Special Educational Needs

curriculumonline.ie thorough information about the education system

schooldays.ie – Ireland's online resource for parents

citizensinformation.ie – free information and advice 0818 07 4000

stepup.ie – a website for parents and young people preparing to move to secondary school



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The WLD Education & Training Team
can be contacted on 053 91 55800.



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