

Transition from Primary to Post-Primary

Challenges for the Pupil and Strategies for the Teacher



Participants' Booklet

Contents

2-4	-	Introduction – <i>Attendance Matters</i>
5	-	Lesson One secondary school – <i>Dealing with Transitions</i>
7	-	Lesson One primary school – <i>Transitions: 6th Class Audit; Question Time</i>
10	-	Lesson One parents – <i>Creating a student profile; questions?</i>
11	-	Lesson two secondary school – <i>The Transitions; Circle time and Myths</i>
12	-	Lesson two primary school – <i>The Transitions; Circle time/ Believe or Not</i>
14	-	Lesson two Parents – <i>Who’s who in schools</i>
15	-	Lesson three secondary school – <i>Wellbeing Workshop</i>
20	-	Lesson three primary school – <i>A Helping hand; Getting to school</i>
23	-	Lesson three parents – <i>Checklists; Morning, Evening, Homework</i>
25	-	Lesson four primary school – <i>Uniforms and Subjects</i>
27	-	Lesson four secondary school – <i>Mentoring guidelines and scenarios</i>
30	-	Lesson four parents – <i>Resolving school conflict</i>

Introduction - Attendance Matters

The aim of this Attendance Booklet is to help parents and teachers support positive school attendance in our school.

When concerns arise around attendance we can support you as parents with this. It is important that you are aware that we understand the challenges that parents / guardians can experience from time to time.

Most young people go to school every day and enjoy it. Some children do experience difficulties in attending school for a variety of reasons.

Consistent school attendance is key to developing a love for learning in your child. When children are in school they have a real sense of belonging. This helps them to learn and succeed.

According to the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, a child should attend school every day that the school is open. There are very few reasons why children should be absent from school. The Education Welfare Act requires children resident in the state to attend school when they reach 6 years of age. Children may not leave school until they are 16 years old and have completed 3 years post primary education whichever occurs later. School Principals are legally obliged to maintain a register of pupils attending his or her school. High levels of school absenteeism must be reported by the Principal to their EWO.

TESS:

TESS, TUSLA Educational Support Service aims to reduce unnecessary absences from school by offering support and help to parents, pupils and schools. The key to achieving this is good communication between the school and home so that any problems can be resolved quickly.

There is a range of local and national services to assist the child, family and school. These include the National Educational Psychological Service, National Council for Special Education, School Completion Programme, Home School & Community Liaison Officers, Family Support Services, ISPCC, Child and Mental Health Services, Child Psychology etc.

List of Local Services

HSE Primary Care Team

Wexford

Enniscorthy

Gorey

Educational Welfare Officer, Government Buildings, Newtown Road Wexford. 053 91 84475 086 0271076

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Wexford office

Enniscorthy Office

TUSLA Services

Social Work

PPFS, Tusla Family Support Services

CYPE web site

Speech Therapy

Occupational therapy

Disability Services Wexford

Barnardo's

FDYS list of provisions

SENO

This transitioning programme has been adapted specifically to suit Traveller and Roma students moving from primary to secondary.

This programme targets students through three strands:

1. Primary school students in 5th and 6th class who are transitioning
2. Secondary school students from 1st to 3rd year for advice and mentoring
3. Parents of primary school students who are transitioning.

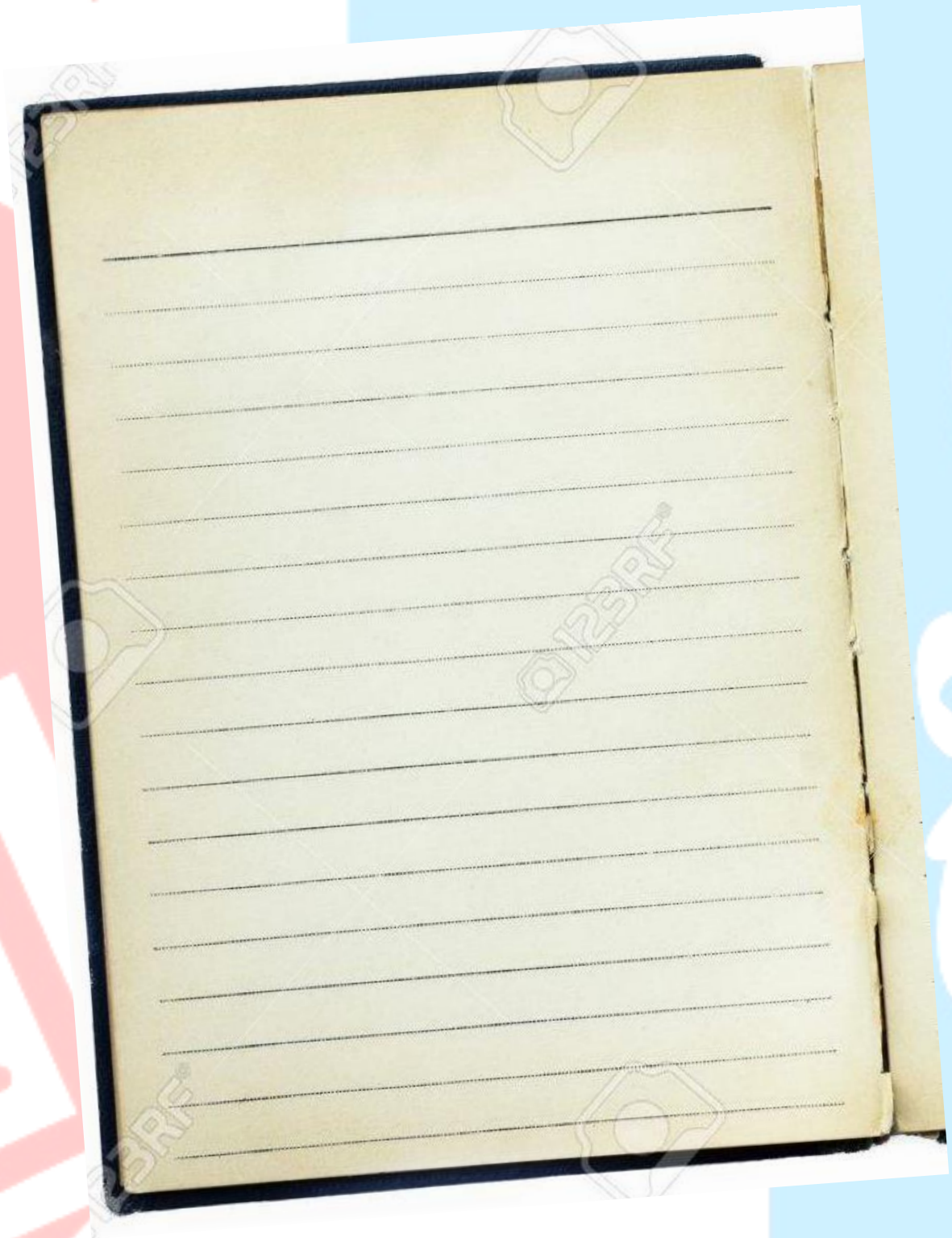
Lesson **One** - Secondary School – **Dealing with Transition** –

Lesson one will focus on the input of the secondary school students and will involve brainstorming ideas with the secondary school cohort examining their own perceptions and experiences of transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Activity

1. **Brainstorm** the positive and negatives of secondary school vs primary school
2. Outline the **similarities and differences** between *primary and secondary*
3. What would have made the transition easier for the students from a Traveller or Roma background.
4. Write up/voice record all findings into a Diary format of their experiences to form My Personal Story section of Transitioning Booklet.

A Personal STORY



Lesson One – Primary

During this lesson the team will target the 5th and 6th class students in primary school who are transitioning from primary to secondary.

1. **Introductions** – Meet the team/facilitator
2. **Brainstorm schools** and the schools **that students would attend**
3. **Possible questions** about secondary schools
4. Sixth class **Audit worksheet**
5. **Discuss** the audit with the group
6. Do **question time exercise** with students

SIXTH CLASS AUDIT

This simple activity will give the teacher a picture of what knowledge the pupil has already in relation to post-primary school.

Complete the Grid on this Page. There are four boxes in the grid.
You can fill each grid with words, sentences, pictures or a mixture of all of these

Here are some tips

1) I expect

(In this box you will be filling in what you think your new school will be like. For example, more homework)

2) I feel

(In this box you will be filling in how you feel about the move to your new school. For example, happy, excited.)

3) Things I am sure of

(In this box fill in what you know for sure about your new school. For example colour of uniform, is it a boys/girls/mixed school)

4) Things I am not sure of

(In this box fill in things you are not sure of. For example what time schools starts, where will I keep my books?)

I expect	I feel
Things I'm sure about	Things I'm not sure about

QUESTION TIME

This activity gives pupils the opportunity to ask and discuss possible questions they may have regarding post-primary.



- Ask your pupils to think of questions that they would like to have answered about post primary schools. Give some examples.
- Distribute pieces of paper which the pupils can write their questions on. It may be a good idea to let pupils think this over and discuss the questions so that they won't feel on the spot.
- Have a question box in the classroom where pupils can place their questions. Pick out a few questions and answer them. Brainstorm with the class what the possible answer/solution to each question is and add/rectify information if necessary.
- Depending on time the questions could be left for homework and raised again in the next lesson. Convey to the pupils that if they think of new questions they can be put in the box at any time.

Lesson One – Parents/Guardians

This module targets Parents and relevant school staff to create a student centred profile of the student who is transitioning, and to find out if they have any questions about the school

1. Introduce **the STAR project**
2. Ask about their **expectations of school** and education
3. Ask about **barriers** to education/**difficulties** with school
4. Ask about **issues to look out for** in school
5. Ask about **what the student likes** in terms of interests and hobbies
6. Ask if is there anything **we can help** with in terms of transitioning
7. **Invite** the parents into the school
8. Find out who or **what organisations have helped** them in the past.
9. What do parents **want to know** about secondary school? (Questions to be answered in the next session)

Lesson Two – Secondary Students

This session will focus on the transitioning experience of the students who have made the transition

FEELING FINE or FEELING FUNNY

This is a circle time activity wherein which pupils are given the opportunity to voice how they felt when they moved to post-primary level.

Circle Time is a great opportunity to address fears/concerns/excitement that pupils have in relation to their transition experience. Possible topics may relate to:

1. *Friendship* – losing friends, making new friends
2. *Bullying/Racism/discrimination*
3. *New opportunities* and new subjects
4. *Friendly faces*
5. Finding their way around



- In a circle pass a ball/object. Only the pupil with the ball/object can speak.
- No negative comments towards other pupils allowed. Everyone must listen to each other.
- Pupils have the option to 'Pass' if they do not wish to comment.
- The activity simply involves the pupil saying how they feel about entering a new school.
- Words will suffice initially but the activity can be extended if you wish pupils to discuss their feelings in more depth.

Myth vs Reality – Have an open discussion with the group around the ***myths they heard about secondary school before they came in*** and ***the reality*** they experienced when they arrived. Have there been other instances in their lives when the reality is very different to what they expected.

Lesson Two – Primary Students

This session will focus on the transitioning experience for the primary students and their expectations of secondary. The lesson will begin with the Circle Time exercise and discussion followed by the Believe it or Not worksheet.

FEELING FINE or FEELING FUNNY

This is a circle time activity wherein which pupils are given the opportunity to voice how they feel about their move to post-primary level.

Circle Time is a great opportunity to address fears/concerns/excitement that pupils have in relation to their transition experience. Possible topics may relate to:

1. Friendship – losing friends, making new friends
2. Bullying
3. New subjects
4. Rumours and myths
5. Lunchtime
6. Positive Expectations



- In a circle pass a ball/object. Only the pupil with the ball/object can speak.
- No negative comments towards other pupils allowed. Everyone must listen to each other.
- Pupils have the option to 'Pass' if they do not wish to comment.
- The activity simply involves the pupil saying how they feel about entering a new school.
- Words will suffice initially but the activity can be extended if you wish pupils to discuss their feelings in more depth.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

This activity opens up discussion as to the 'horror' stories pupils in primary school hear in relation to post-primary and lends itself to one clarifying the actuality in these instances.

Everyone hears stories of what secondary school is like, maybe you have heard things from your friends, your family or maybe you read it in a book. Sometimes you may hear things that make you think that secondary school will not be a very nice place. These stories are usually not true, they are made up, and they are false. Think about and talk with your class about the stories that you will read below, they are all FALSE, and figure out that the TRUE thing to say might be.

FALSE	TRUE
 The school is so massive you will get lost all the time and no one will tell you where to go.	
All first years get their heads flushed down the toilet 	
 The teachers will not let you ask questions if you cannot understand the work 	
If you make a mistake in your homework or cannot do it you get detention 	
 You will have 4 hours of homework every night	
It will be really hard to make friends because everyone else will know each other 	

Lesson Two – Parents

Who's who in schools – This lesson helps parents to get to know all of the relevant people and various systems in their child's new school. It would be good to build on the parent's previous knowledge of school systems.

Introduce the following:

- Principal
- Vice Principal
- HSCLs
- Transport
- Extra supports i.e. Breakfast Clubs, Homework Clubs
- Book rental schemes
- Uniforms
- Payments
- Materials
- Checklist

Explain each of the titles above and help parents find out how to engage with each person, service and requirement.

Lesson 3 **secondary students**

Five a Day for Wellbeing – Five things everybody can do to look after their mental health.
Go through the 5 a day and fill out the following worksheet.



1. Connect

Human are social creatures. We crave connection just as we crave food and water. NEF's report showed relationships with other people are fundamental to our happiness. Close relationships with family and friends give us support and a sense of meaning in our lives. Wider social networks give us a sense of belonging. So you should put effort into keeping the connections you have alive, and make new ones.

So commit to talking to people everyday. Eating with loved ones gives us a boost - aim to do it at least once a day. Also, make the effort to share the good things about your day when you're asked, not just the negative bits. Telling someone that you're grateful to have them in your life - and why - is a wonderful exercise.

Focusing on the person in front of you is important too. That means put your devices in your bag or pocket when you're with other people. It helps to deepen our sense of connection.

2. Be active

Exercising releases endorphins that make us feel good. The simplest way to think about it is healthy body = healthy mind. Being active doesn't have to mean the gym, triathlons or lifting weights (though those are great and will give you a big sense of achievement).

Just find the activity that fits into your daily life. You get bonus points if it includes a friend or being out in nature. Go for a walk, try yoga, join a team sport or just dance in your kitchen when you're cooking. Leave your car at home one day and walk or cycle.

Exercise beats stress and makes us feel good about ourselves. Regular exercise is also linked to better sleep.

3. Take notice

It is concerning how busy we all are these days, stuck in our phones or our heads and unable to tolerate doing nothing for a few minutes. But the truth is, internal chatter does chip away at our wellbeing. It distracts us so much that we don't appreciate or notice what's around us. We are mind-full instead of mindful.

This is easily fixed. Just take a few moments to be aware of what is going on within you and around you. Practices like this - one of the exercises of mindfulness - can free us, just for a few moments, from living in the past or future. It will genuinely make our day-to-day lives more enjoyable.

Here's what you can do: Be curious. Look up and look around on your daily commute and you might see something beautiful you didn't notice before. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether it's a morning coffee or clean sheets or a warm hug. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Sign up for a meditation class and notice the difference in your mood after six weeks of daily mindfulness.

4. Keep learning

Learning opens us to new ideas and keeps us curious and engaged. It usually comes with a sense of accomplishment which can boost our confidence.

Learning doesn't have to mean classes or courses. Learning by doing is a very satisfying way to broaden your skillset. .

So try something new. Rediscover an old interest, especially one you had as a child. Sign up for that evening course you've been curious about. Learn a practical skill like changing a tire or fixing a bike chain. Challenge yourself to learn a new instrument or try a new recipe.

5. Give

Doing good is good for us. Helping others makes us feel needed and valued, and of course those we help get a benefit. In all, giving leads to a more compassionate society.

Giving ranges from random acts of kindness to significant commitments. Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Give an surprise gift. Give up your seat. Give a compliment. Thank someone. Smile - especially in traffic.

Volunteer your time and skills. Fundraise for a cause you are passionate about. Join a community group (Tidy Towns need you!). All these activities can be incredibly rewarding and satisfying. It will create and strengthen connections with the people around you, which will lead you back to no 1; Connect!

Write down One thing you could do for each of the following:

Connect – (write about someone who you would like to reconnect with and one way in which you could reconnect with that person, eg. A brother/sister while watching a film together or baking or cooking)

Be Active – (Write down one way in which you could improve your physical activity)

Take Notice – Look around you for a few minutes, take a walk, pick out one thing that you haven't noticed before.

Keep learning – Write one or more things that you have always wanted to do, to learn or to find out more about

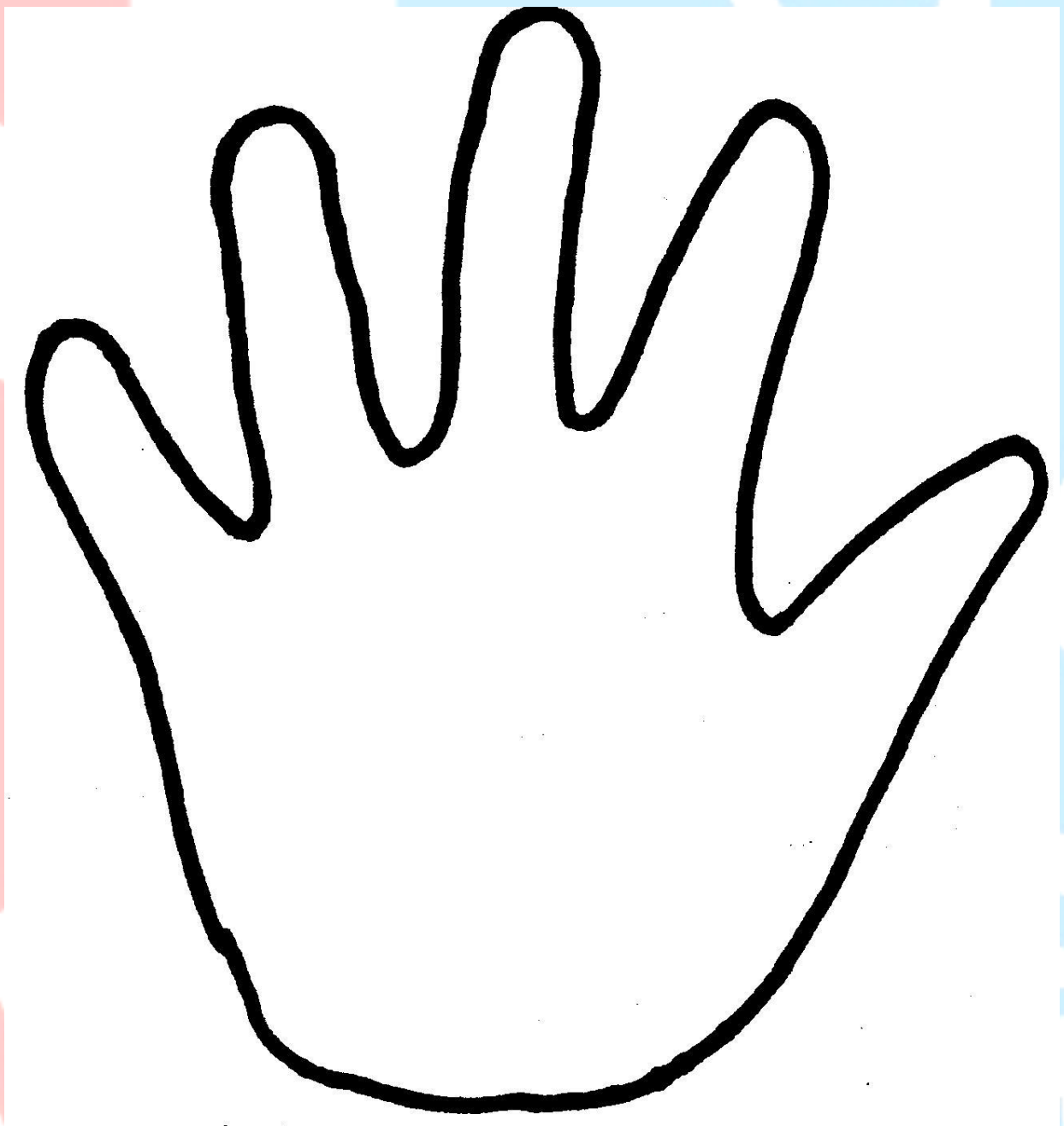
Give – Think about a time that you were given something that you really liked or appreciated. How did it make you feel? Write down one or more things that you could give to someone that doesn't cost anything.

Lesson 3 primary students – A helping Hand and Getting to my new school

A helping hand and Getting to know your school

A HELPING HAND

This activity will aid pupils in becoming more aware of the possible sources of help when they enter the post-primary setting



Helping hand

Elicit from your class what kind of help there may be in the new post primary school when they arrive? (Brainstorm) Talk with your class about the many forms of help that will be in post primary such as year heads, class teachers, friends, principal, vice principal, other pupils, older brothers and sisters etc.

Get the pupil to write different sources on each finger. They can accompany this with written/visual descriptions.



GETTING TO MY NEW SCHOOL

This activity enables pupils to consider and discuss how they will be travelling to their new school, what route will be taken etc. Access to software in relation to route-planning may also be utilised in discussing this activity in class.

Think about how you will travel to your new school in September. You may need to get up earlier to get there on time. If you are getting a bus, you will need to know where the bus stop is. If you are walking or cycling, do you know the safest way? Only fill in the information that deals with how you will be travelling. Ignore the others.

Walking	Cycling	Travelling by Car	Travelling by Bus/Luas
			
Do you know the way to walk to school?	Do you know the way to cycle to school?	How long will it take to get to school?	Where is the stop where you wait in the morning?
How long will it take?	Is there a place in school where you can put your bike?	Who will be driving the car?	Where is the stop where you will wait after school?
Will there be anyone walking with you?	Will your cycling helmet fit in your locker?	Where will the driver drop you off?	Have you a bus timetable?
Have you walked to the school before?	Will there be other students cycling with you?	Where will the driver collect you?	What is the number/name that will be on the bus?
	How long does it take to cycle to school?	Do you know how to walk to school from where you will be dropped off and collected from?	How much is each journey?
			How long does the journey take?

Lesson 3 - Parents

Homework support and checklists – In this lesson checklists are provided to help parents get their children organised for school and homework.

Revise the checklists with parents.

Morning Checklist:

Full Uniform:
Tie, School
Jacket.

Do I have my
locker key and
swipe card?

Do I have all zip
files for todays
classes?



Do I need my:
PE Gear
Ingredients
Art Pack

Is my school
bag packed
and ready?
Lunch...

Evening Checklist:

Full Uniform:
Tie, School
Jacket.

Do I have my
locker key and
swipe card?

Have I complete
all homework for
tomorrows classes?



Do I need my:
PE Gear
Ingredients
Art Pack

Is my school
bag packed
and ready?

Homework Tips

1. Find a quiet and well lit place to do homework
2. Make sure your child has all the necessary materials, e.g. Pens, copy, rulers, colours, calculator etc.
3. Try and help your child manage their time. A 1st year student should not be spending more than 20 minutes homework on average per subject, and shouldn't have more than an hour homework in general.
4. Have a positive attitude to homework; your child will pick up on this.
5. Show an interest in your child's homework.
6. The parent is there to guide and advise on homework, not to do it for them.
7. Follow the easy; hard; easy method. Do the easiest bit of homework first, then a harder piece, then back to an easy piece etc.
8. Watch for frustration in your child and offer help and support. This could be as simple as bringing them a cup of tea, or asking them to take a 10 minute break.
9. Reward your child with recognition and praise.

Lesson 4 – Primary School – Uniform and Subjects

SCHOOL UNIFORM

This activity encourages the pupil to find out about the uniform that they will be required to wear in their new school. Pupils should be encouraged to observe the uniform on open nights and find out if any items of clothing are not allowed e.g. earrings

It is important that you start your new school by wearing the correct uniform. The uniform will be different to the one that you are wearing now. The clothes for PE will also be different. There will also be things that you cannot wear. You can find this information out on the school open night, from the school journal or by asking people you know that are in the school.

Fill in as much as you can in the worksheet below about what your new uniform will be like and what you are not allowed to wear. You can draw pictures or write words. The choice is yours.

What I will be wearing next September. <u>My New Uniform</u>		
<u>School Clothes</u>	<u>PE Clothes</u>	<u>What I Cannot Wear</u>

WHAT DOES IT ALL STAND FOR?

The words in the first column are a quick and short way to write subjects in a timetable. Can you figure out what they stand for?

Metalwork Science French History Business Studies German Geography
 Religion Metalwork Social, Personal and Health Education Woodwork Religion
 Civic, Social and Political Education Maths Metalwork Gaeilge (Irish) Woodwork

What Are All These Classes?

Subject	What is the Subject?	Number of classes	Who is my teacher?
Ir			
Eng			
Maths			
Sci			
Bus			
Hist			
Geog			
Wk			
Home Ec			
RE			
CSPE			
SPHE			
TD			

Lesson 4 – Secondary School – Mentoring

When students start secondary school they are often a little bit lost. Sometimes the older students can even be a bit scared or intimidated by the older, bigger students in the school.

A friendly face and a helping hand can go a long way in helping students settle into school. Teachers can help students settle into school but older students can help even more as the new students will often relate better to someone closer to their own age.

Mentoring not only helps the younger students but can also give a sense of belonging and responsibility to the older students providing the help.

Our Ground Rules

- 1. Be kind to others and think about their feelings**
- 2. Behave sensibly**
- 3. Respect other people's opinions/property**
- 4. Sit properly**
- 5. Listen to each other**
- 6. Be polite**
- 7. Keep each other safe**

You need to devise a suitable consequence for breaking the rules with your group which should be noted here. An example would be 5 minutes time out.

Looking at the list below, choose 4 things you consider to be important to get from your school life, and discuss how you can help younger students achieve these.

- **Doing different things**
- **Learning tolerance**
- **Qualifications**
- **Knowledge**
- **Making Friends**
- **Rising to a challenge**
- **Being part of a group**
- **Achievement**
- **Pleasure**
- **Equality**
- **Getting a good job**
- **A nice environment**
- **Having a lot of work to do**
- **Praise/recognition**
- **Rewards**
- **Honesty**
- **Success**

Secondary School SCENARIOS – Discuss the following scenarios

Scenario 1

Bridget has been mentoring Charlene for the first few weeks in school and it has really helped them both. They have become quite friendly with each other and Charlene has settled into her new school really well. One day Bridget notices that Charlene is very quiet and not herself and she asks her what's wrong. Charlene tells Bridget that she saw something horrible written about herself on the whiteboard in her classroom before class and doesn't want to go back in there.

Scenario 2

Michael has been mentoring Luke since the beginning of the school year. They both enjoy school and are interested in similar things. Michael wants to do business after secondary school and Luke is also interested in working in business and would like to own his own company some day. They have the same business teacher and she says they both have a lot of potential. They used to do their homework together in the homework club but Luke has stopped coming to homework club. He has now started to get into trouble in school for not having homework. He says it is because his friends have started to make fun of him for staying after school to do homework.

Scenario 3

Cathy has been mentoring Ann for a few months. They started off really well and became very close. They would speak every day in school and in the evenings on the phone, mostly about school life, which they both enjoyed. However, they did not speak to each other much over the Christmas holidays and Ann has been very distant from Cathy since they returned to school. When Cathy asked Ann if there was a problem Ann said that "there's no point talking about school as she wouldn't be there for long".

Scenario 4

Paddy is a popular student who is mentoring Christy. Paddy has noticed that while Christy seems happy when they speak to each other, and seems to be getting on well in school, he is rarely with other students from his year group. In between classes and during breaks Christy is mostly walking around on his own.

Lesson 4 – Parents – Resolving Conflict

"My teacher hates me!" If you've heard this phrase a few times and your child seems to be struggling, it can have a serious effect on their learning. Even if the student and the teacher don't click, there are things you can do to improve the situation and open up communication.

- **Stay positive!** Be careful not to undermine the teacher's authority. Even if you're feeling negative toward the teacher, try not to let your child know that. Give everyone a chance before you make up your mind about anything.
- **Listen carefully.** In order to get the facts straight, ask your child open-ended questions, then follow up by asking for specific examples that tell you what you're dealing with. Is it a personality conflict? An academic problem? They may just need to get a frustration off their chest, sharing with you may help them put the situation in perspective and that might be enough to fix the problem.
- **Brainstorm solutions together.** Your child may have some ideas and opinions about what they, the teacher, or you can do to fix the problem. Soliciting their input will show them that their thoughts are valued, and forging a plan together may help them be more receptive to possible solutions.
- **Observe the situation.** If the conflict seems to originate from the teacher, get as much information as you can before scheduling a meeting with them. Question other parents whose children are or were in the teacher's class for their input. While your child's complaints may be legitimate, he may be struggling with a different teaching style or longing to move into a class with his friends.
- **Talk to the teacher.** Ask for the teacher's evaluation of the situation and suggestions on how your child could improve before you express your concerns. Posing questions and avoiding accusations will yield the best results.
- **Connect with the classroom.** Volunteering time or keeping in regular contact with the teacher will help both of you understand each other and communicate better. When the teacher does make an extra effort with your child it should be recognised.
- **If necessary, meet with the principal.** If you feel the situation isn't improving and you aren't getting an adequate response from the teacher, request a meeting with a school administrator. The principal may be able to explain the teacher's approach and more objectively assess the situation.

Discipline in schools. Usually in schools the discipline structure is Teacher; Year head/Class teacher; Vice-principal; Discipline committee; Principal; Board of Management.