

Guidance on Induction and Transition - Pre-school Education

Introduction

Traditionally, many pre-school settings and primary schools have adopted a staggered or phased settling in period for children, building up to a full pattern of attendance sometime during the first term. Although settling in times are at the discretion of each school and pre-school, this varies across and between settings.

Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning includes an action for the Department of Education to issue guidance on reducing the length of settling in time for pre-school and Year 1 to take account of the child's previous experience. The overall aim of the action

is to minimise the settling in period to ensure that all children are settled into, and experience, the full or part time day in pre-school settings and Year 1 of primary school as early as possible or appropriate to a child's individual needs from the beginning of September each year.

This guidance is intended to:

- assist teachers and staff in pre-school settings and Year 1 to settle children into their new environments at the start or during the school year; and
- help parents understand the purpose of the settling in arrangements and what happens when children start school or pre-school.

Induction is the process by which children are introduced to their educational environment in a pre-school setting and/or the first year of the Foundation Stage in primary school. The purpose of induction is to develop a positive relationship between the staff in the education setting, the parents, and the child. It is important that parents and staff work together to support the child during the settling in process.

Transition is the means by which children experience a smooth passage from one setting or stage to another, for example, from home/day-care to pre-school or from pre-school to the first year of Foundation Stage in primary school.

Induction and Transition - Pre-school Settings

Children's experiences prior to starting pre-school will vary and this should be considered when planning the induction process. A significant number of children may have experienced some form of day-care prior to starting pre-school, some may have also taken part in the Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2/3 year olds, and others may have been in statutory pre-school settings in their penultimate pre-school year. It is the responsibility of the pre-school setting and the parents to prepare the child as best they can for their transition into the new setting.

Generally, it is expected that:

- The majority of children should be settled into the pre-school setting within the first two to three weeks of September (dependent on the number of classes per setting, class size and staff ratio), with all children attending daily, for their full session, no later than the end of September¹;
- For full time sessions, it is expected that the majority of children should be staying for meals within four weeks of their start date. It is particularly important that children entitled to free school meals are settled in and staying for their meals at the earliest possible date in September;
- Children should attend consistently and regularly i.e. every day as their time is increased;
- Arrangements for settling in should be flexible rather than fixed, to ensure every child's individual needs, including Special Educational Needs, are met and parents fully understand the rationale behind the process, this is particularly important for those children who may find it difficult to settle, and may require a shorter session at the beginning with the aim of building up to the full session time. Parents should be informed about any additional arrangements that need to be put in place to help their child settle in;
- The pre-school setting should have appropriate procedures in place to inform parents of the settling in process, for example, parents' meeting and/or open days in May or June prior to the children starting in September;
- Parents should be given information about the pre-school curriculum, daily routines and the settling in process. The 'Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education' sets out ways of promoting

good practice in terms of involving parents as partners and helping the transition to primary school;

- Induction information for children starting in September should be distributed prior to the summer break. It should clearly explain the settling in process and provide parents with start dates and expected duration of sessions (the setting should discuss with the parent any proposed variation in these in response to the individual needs of each child upon enrolment); and
- Pre-school settings should engage with parents, and where possible other care/education providers and other professionals (health, speech and language therapy, social services, educational psychology etc) to gather all relevant information about a child's needs and previous experiences in order to plan an appropriate programme of learning.

Inspection

During inspections, inspectors will evaluate the settling in procedures for pre-school and comment in the report where they find that the settling in times are excessive, do not take account of the previous experiences of the children or differentiate sufficiently to meet the children's individual needs.

¹ *Irish-medium pre-schools may need a somewhat longer period to settle all children given the different linguistic context*

Guidance on Induction and Transition - Year 1 of Primary School

Introduction

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settled into, and experience, the full or part time day in pre-school settings and Year 1 of primary school as early as possible or appropriate to a child's individual needs from the beginning of September each year.

This guidance is intended to:

- assist teachers and staff in pre-school settings and Year 1 to settle children into their new environments at the start or during the school year; and
- help parents understand the purpose of the settling in arrangements and what happens when children start school or pre-school.

Induction is the process by which children are introduced to their

educational environment in a pre-school setting and/or the first year of the Foundation Stage in primary school. The purpose of induction is to develop a positive relationship between the staff in the education setting, the parents, and the child. It is important that parents and staff work together to support the child during the settling in process.

Transition is the means by which children experience a smooth passage from one setting or stage to another, for example, from home/day-care to pre-school or from pre-school to the first year of Foundation Stage in primary school.

Induction and Transition - Year 1 of Primary School

By the time they start primary school the majority of children¹ will have benefitted from a pre-school experience, and primary schools should consider this when deciding on the optimum time for phasing children into Year 1 of the Foundation Stage. The length of a pre-school session that children may have experienced prior to starting primary school will vary, and this should be considered when planning the induction process.

Generally it is expected that:

- The majority of children should be settled into the first term of Year 1 of primary school within the first two weeks of September²; it is expected that the majority of children should be staying for meals within four weeks of their start date. It is particularly important that children entitled to free school meals are settled in and staying for their meals at the earliest possible date in September.

- Strong links should be established where possible with the pre-school setting the child previously attended to ensure a smoother transition;
- Children should have an opportunity to visit their new school where possible before they start in September in order to begin to become familiar with the new environment and the staff;
- Primary schools may need to put in place different arrangements to take account of the individual circumstances of some children. Where this is the case, induction arrangements should reflect the needs of that individual child, including any Special Educational Needs, and the parents should be informed about any additional arrangements that need to be put in place to help their child settle in; and

- The Foundation Stage curriculum builds on children's previous and existing knowledge and skills. Whilst not always practical, end of year visits by the Year 1 teacher to pre-school settings provide an opportunity for staff to exchange information about children and the curriculum they have experienced which could help the Year 1 teacher in planning and preparing for the individual needs of the children and to help them to settle into their new environment.

Inspection

During inspections, inspectors will evaluate the settling in procedures for Year 1 of primary school and comment in the report where they find that the settling in times are excessive, do not take account of the previous experiences of the children or differentiate sufficiently to meet the children's individual needs.

¹ 92% of children in Year 1 of primary school in 2013/14 attended pre-school

² Irish-medium pre-schools may need a somewhat longer period to settle all children given the different linguistic context