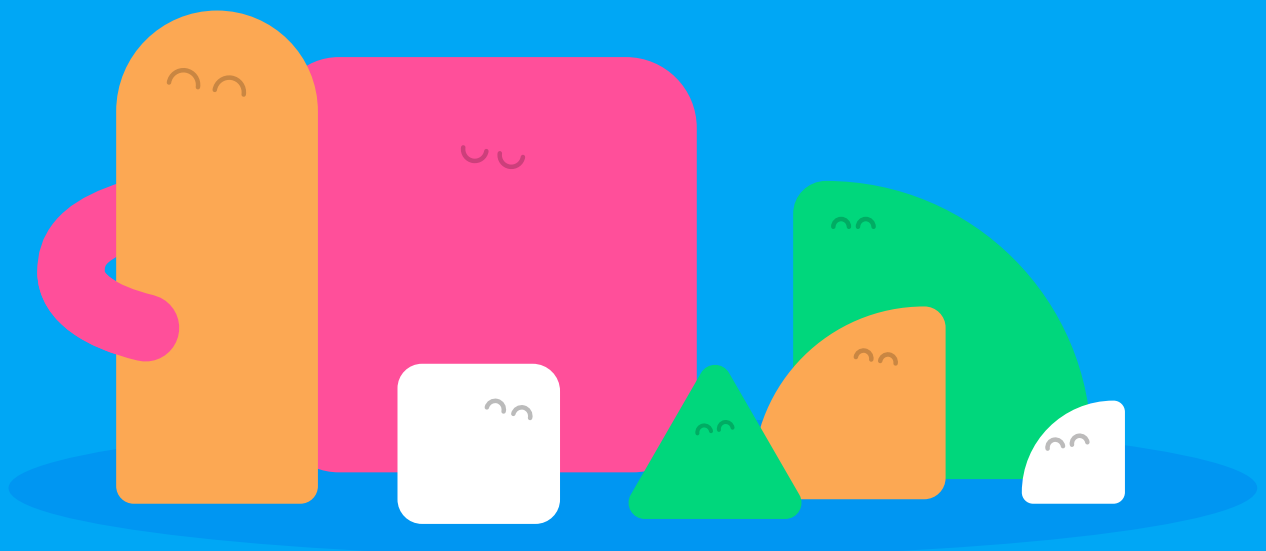


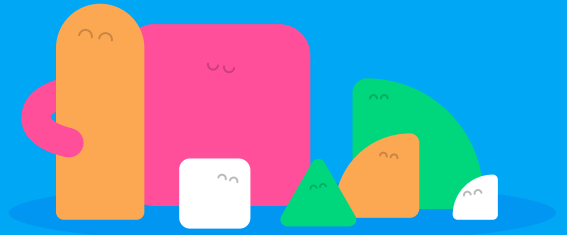
# Parent Support Sheet

FUTURE READY – PREPARING FOR 1ST YEAR MODULE



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FUTURE READY – PREPARING FOR  
1ST YEAR MODULE



## Dear Parents and Guardians,

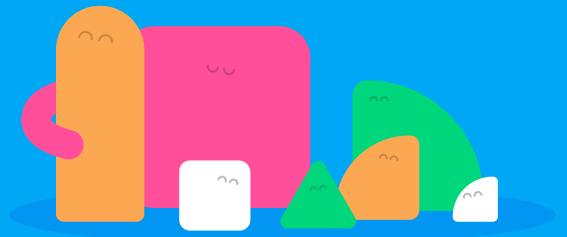
Irish mental health charity, A Lust for Life, have developed a primary school wellbeing and resilience programme, 'The Schools Programme', ([alfschools.com](http://alfschools.com)) which is designed to build resilience, increase wellbeing and enhance the emotional literacy of primary school children. Over the last number of years we have worked with a team of educators and psychologists as well as parents and children to develop a programme which aims to teach children the essential tools to manage the ups and downs of life. We are delighted that you child/the child in your care is taking part in the 5th & 6th class programme at present.

As part of the 5th & 6th class programme we have developed an extension module called the 'Future Ready - Preparing for 1st Year' module. This module has been designed specifically to support 5th and 6th class pupils ahead of the big move to secondary school.

We have created this Parent Support Sheet to help you through this experience also and to help you engage with the activities and learnings from the programme with your child. This support sheet provides an overview of what your child will be/is learning and also includes some top tips from the psychological lead on this programme, Clinical Psychologist, Author and Health Advocate, Dr. Eddie Murphy.

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## I. Lesson Summary:

### Lesson 1:

Pupils will be enabled to:

Begin to understand how change might make them feel.

- + Acknowledge their feelings about starting secondary school.
- + Begin to understand where these feelings are coming from.

Goal of the lesson: To support children's understanding of their emotions and thoughts in advance of transitioning to secondary school.

### Lesson 2:

Pupils will be enabled to:

- + Anticipate what the first week in secondary school might be like.
- + Find resolutions to challenges that might appear the first week of secondary school.

Goal of the lesson: To explore what the pupils' first week of secondary school might look like.

### Lesson 3:

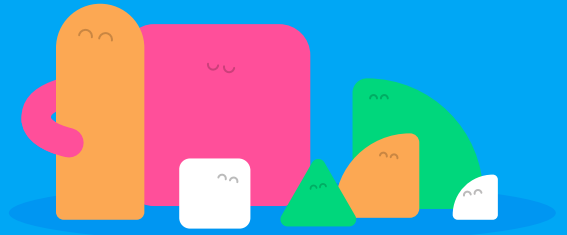
Pupils will be enabled to:

- + Understand shared experiences and that starting secondary school is a universal experience.
- + Do some rudimentary research – exploring school websites/interviewing past pupils.

Goal of the lesson: To support children's agency in researching and discovering more about secondary school.

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## 2. Try it at Home Activities & Discussion Points with your child:

In each lesson, there are some suggested activities your child may do in school or at home to further support their learning. The at-home activities are called 'Try it at Home'.

### Lesson 1:

- + **Writing:** Write a journal entry or multiple journal entries pretending you are in the first couple of weeks of secondary school. Write about what you experience, how you feel about them, and what you did.
- + **Art:** Create a poster with a slogan reminding pupils of how capable they are, or a reminder that they can ask for help.
- + **History:** Interview family members about the time that they started secondary school. How might their experience be different to their parents or grandparents?
- + **PE:** Practice the walk from home to secondary school with an adult or other peers. If this is not possible, perhaps you could walk to the bus stop.

Talk to your child about:

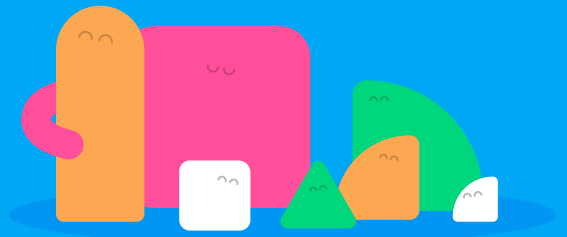
- + How life is always changing, sometimes with changes we see coming and anticipate, sometimes with unknown changes.
- + Starting secondary school, what might be different in their lives, what might be the same as now.

### Lesson 2:

- + **Writing:** Write a journal entry or multiple journal entries pretending you are in the first couple of weeks of secondary school. Write about what you experience, how you feel about them, and what you did.
- + **Art:** Think about identity. Build on your art piece that you did in class and finish it for homework.
- + **Geography:** Map the journey from home to school. Use Google Maps or other technologies if walking or travelling the distance is not an option.
- + **PE:** Practice the walk from home to secondary school with an adult or other peers. If this is not possible, perhaps you could walk to the bus stop.

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Talk to your child about:

- + How they can make friends in secondary school by being a friend. Talk about how best they might be able to be friends with others.
- + How they will be travelling to school.
- + How they might organise their space at home best for secondary school and establish good routines for themselves e.g. setting an alarm, having a dedicated space for homework, planning study time around hobbies and dinner time etc.

## Lesson 3:

- + **Writing:** Write a descriptive essay about primary school, and their feelings about starting secondary school.
- + **Art:** Create a poster with a slogan reminding pupils of how capable they are, or a reminder that they can ask for help.
- + **SPHE > Healthy Practices:** Thinking about sleep and starting secondary school, work on a sleep routine that works well for you. Avoid screentime for at least an hour, if not two, before bed time. Schedule an activity like reading or colouring before bed, with a bedside lamp rather than the full light on.
- + **Music:** Learn or compose a graduating song.
- + **PE:** Practice the walk from home to secondary school with an adult or other peers. If this is not possible, perhaps you could walk to the bus stop.

Talk to your child about:

- + Their secondary school and the links that have been created to it, visiting on the open night, knowing older family members etc.
- + The values of the secondary school, and the values that they will have as a student.

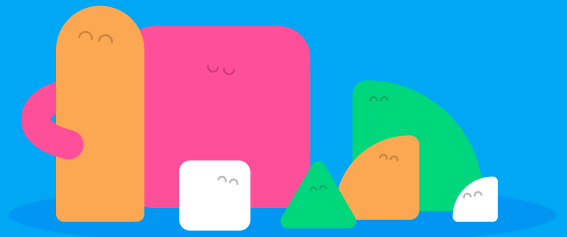
## 3. Tips from a Psychologist:

Transition to Secondary School – Making It Work

*Many houses in Ireland experience massive changes as teenagers walk out the doors, with adults and children sharing emotions; excited, worried, delighted, concerned, proud, etc. That old adage 'Time Flies' is true. The reality is these times represent life transitions. Transitioning from primary school to secondary school can be a significant step for children and parents alike. Generally transitions don't work in straight lines and all children are not the same, for some they will blossom straight away for others there will be struggles.*

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*Transitions are stressful, this is normal, so let's look at how we can manage these transitions. Here are 15 Tips to support you and your children during this transition: I have divided them into the following areas Social & Emotional, Educational, and Practical Tips.*

– Dr. Eddie Murphy

## Social & Emotional

### 1. Normalising & Open Communication:

Foster open and honest communication with your child. Encourage them to share their thoughts, concerns, and expectations about the new school. When your teenager expresses their concern regarding worries about meeting new friends, or being bullied it's important to listen. Stock reply's "you will be grand", just won't cut it. Explore those worries and try to understand them from your child's perspective. Acknowledge and normalise – for example "I know this is can be a difficult time, I too was worried when I started secondary school, how would I get on, would I get lost in the corridors, would I find the classrooms, would I make friends – you know this is all normal and it will get less over time we can work on some bits to help you."

### 2. Friendship Support:

Help your child maintain old friendships and encourage the development of new ones. Friendships provide crucial support during transitions.

### 3. Positive Attitude:

Instil a positive attitude towards the new experiences and challenges. Highlight the exciting opportunities that come with the transition to secondary school.

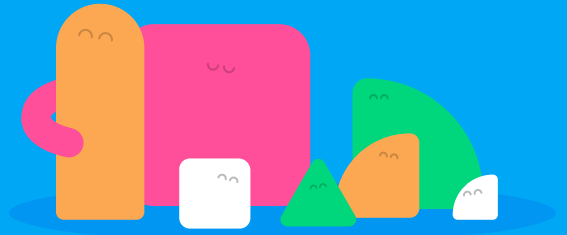
### 4. Peer Pressure & Role Play:

Address the concept of peer pressure openly.

I believe that role play is the most powerful strategy parents can use in addressing peer pressure. Here you can address the concerns that your child has raised and develop role plays. An adult mind and maturity can role play many situations and give verbal responses to managing challenging situations. For the secondary school child; these role plays may relate to breaking into a new group or making new friends, to managing bullying situations, or asking for help; effectively the strategies are shaped around the particular concerns that are raised.

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## Educational

### 5. Study Environment:

Create a conducive study environment at home. Try to ensure your child has a quiet and organised space to do homework and study.

### 6. Be Informed about the Curriculum:

Stay informed about the curriculum and subjects your child will be studying. Talk to your teenager during the 'Sampling Subjects Period' if their school offers this or during the first few weeks of their selected new subjects. Talk to other parents and teachers. You know your child better than anyone and will have an idea of subjects that are more appropriate to their learning style.

### 7. Study Habits & Technology:

Establish guidelines for technology use, including screen time and online safety. Secondary school often involves more use of digital resources and devices. Students know about AI/ ChatGPT as shortcuts to doing work. These shortcuts are not present during exams so it's best to encourage good study habits and skills to complete homework and assignments on their own.

### 8. Connect with Teachers:

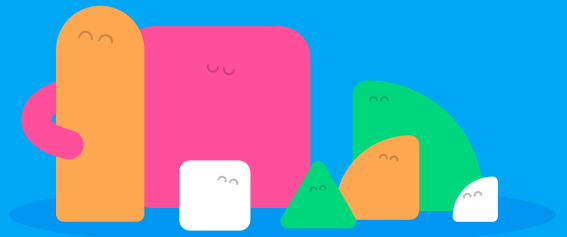
Establish a connection with your child's teachers. Regular and early communication is key to shared understanding and challenges they may be facing.

### 9. Reach Out:

Remind your child that it's okay to ask for help when needed. Whether it's academic support or worries or concerns, there are resources available at the secondary school.

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## Practical

### 10. School Orientation:

Attend any orientation sessions offered by the secondary school. This will help both you and your child become familiar with the new environment and meet teachers and staff. If your child needs additional supports or more time in advance rather than a once off visit arrange this with the school. Many schools have a Home School Liaison Teacher who can assist. It's in everyone's interest for success, and secondary schools are happy to assist.

### 11. Routine:

Summer can be loose time, later bed times, too much technology and less boundaries. Technology can be both a sword and a shield; however the week before commencement of secondary school is the time to reduce it. And so the conflicts will start. And they will. As earlier nights get insisted upon there is push back. Our job as parents is to persist despite the protestations, drawing on our inner reserves of patience!

### 12. More Routine:

In the first few weeks help your child to establish a routine for morning preparations and homework. Predictability brings a sense of stability during this transition.

### 13. School Books & Supplies:

Assist your child in organising their school supplies. A well-prepared backpack will instil confidence and readiness.

### 14. Extracurricular Activities:

Explore and encourage involvement in extracurricular activities. This helps your child build a sense of belonging and discover their interests.

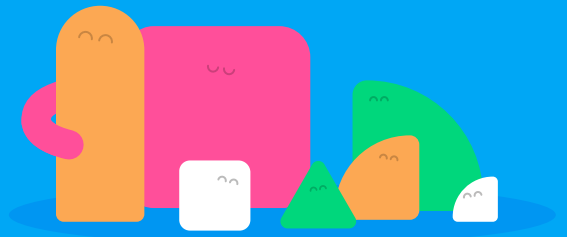
### 15. The Basics:

Any transition is eased for both parent and teenager by the presence of a healthy dose of sufficient sleep, good nutrition, and regular exercise which all contribute to overall well-being.



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## Summary

Remember, every child is unique. Neurodiversity and learning styles differ, so the transition experience will vary. Be patient, offer support, and celebrate the successes, no matter how small, as your child navigates this important phase of their education.

Transitions represent change and learning. Managing change is the greatest life lesson of them all. Helping others always start with helping yourself – you can't as a parent pour from an empty cup. Prepare for challenges and remember you and your child are resilient. Maintain a positive and reassuring attitude. Your optimism will help alleviate any anxiety your child may be feeling about the transition and a stance of openness will boost confidence and motivation. Link with other parents for supports during this period.

Remember you are not alone. Ten of thousands of houses are going through this transition, you will prevail, your child will thrive.

## 4. Resources:

To learn more about transitioning to secondary school, the following might be some helpful guides:

- + Local Education Centres sometimes offer courses for parents of children who are starting secondary schools.
- + Discuss with your child's teacher about concerns you might have regarding them starting secondary school.
- + If your child has any additional needs, consult with the Additional Needs Co-ordinator in Primary School and Secondary school about how to best help the child prepare and succeed in secondary school.