



Transition to School Support Pack

RECOMMENDATIONS & STRATEGIES

ATTENTION, REGULATION & BEHAVIOUR

- In a classroom situation, consider pausing and creating suspense by looking around before asking questions and randomly pick a child so that the child cannot time his/her attention.
- Consider using the child's name in a story or in the material being covered- this will assist in engaging him/her and maintaining interest.
- Ask a simple unrelated question to the child when his/her attention is beginning to wander. Or stand close to the child and touch him/her on the shoulder as you are teaching to keep him on task.
- Addressing the pupil individually at times (for example, the child may not realise that an instruction given to the whole class also includes him/her until pointed out by an adult. Calling the pupil's name and saying "NAME, I need you to listen as this is something for you to do" can sometimes work; other times the pupil will need to be addressed individually).
- Repeating instructions and checking understanding. Using short sentences to ensure clarity of instructions.
- Using various means of presentation - visual, physical guidance, peer modelling, etc.
- Give praise for attentive looking and listening
- Tell a child what to do, rather than what not to do. Using positive language will help him respond more positively to situations which may be problematic. Avoid the tantrum producing NO when possible e.g. "NAME sit on the chair" rather than "No! Stop jumping on the chair". Your use of language as discussed is very important rather than ask "NAME do you want to sit down" simply state "..... sit down" so he doesn't have the opportunity to refuse your request.
- Evaluate situations that are difficult. If there is a particular situation that causes major problems during transitions, evaluate the circumstances surrounding the situations. For instance, it could be that the child doesn't want to do the next activity due to sensory overload. (SEE ATTACHMENT)
- It is extremely important that appropriate set up for all table top activities is encouraged. Always ensure appropriate set up for seated work (as below). This will help to improve posture and concentration and help to prevent fatigue. Consider the use of posture cards as a visual cue for children.

IDEAL POSTURE

- Chair is fully pulled under the desk.
- Feet are supported or flat on the ground.
- Bottom is all the way back in the chair so that the lower back is touching the backrest of the chair.
- Forearms are resting comfortably on the table.
- The child can lean forwards slightly when working.





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- It will be important to consider the child's placement within the classroom to minimize and reduce distraction. Try positioning the child towards the top of the classroom facing the board/teacher. Placing the child at the front of the class will mean that there will be less visual distraction of other pupils in front when looking at the board. Consider any other areas that may be very distracting (e.g. Beside the window, door to the classroom) and try avoid these.

The use of structured **movement breaks** will be required throughout the day and during prolonged periods of sitting. These should be carried out in a **functional manner**;

- Carrying workbooks to teacher's desk
- Cleaning work board
- Structured movement song
- Help rearrange desks/chairs in the classroom
- Fill small baskets (ones that students can carry) with books to place on the shelf and/or take to other classrooms. The teachers could ask students to move these baskets back and forth as needed
- Carry books with both hands hugging the book to the chest
- Help set up for class/break time by helping to carry items to the room, move the mats, chairs etc
- Take crunchy food breaks with dry cereal, fruit, crackers or popcorn
- Open doors for people

Provide these opportunities for movement both as preparation for seated work and as a movement break every 20-30 minutes. Consider the use of movement songs with actions as preparation for seated or table top activities work. The use of movement songs with actions worked well as preparation for seated or table top activities work during the group. It is important to remember that the goal of sensory strategies is to support regulation – to support the child's attention to participate in school activities.

VISUAL STRATEGIES

What is a visual schedule?

Visual schedule systems are an easy way to provide students with consistent cues about their daily activities. They provide a structure that allows a student to anticipate what will happen next, reduce anxiety by providing the student with a vision of his/her day and promote calmness between transitions. They are especially important for students who have a profile that includes difficulties with the understanding of oral language and directions. **The consistency provided by a visual schedule is crucial in establishing an atmosphere of trust and security.** Visual supports can also provide motivation to work through a less favoured activity knowing a favoured activity is to follow such as a first/then board.

Examples of visual schedules





Finished

- Refer to the timetable at the start of each day and at the start of each activity, using language such as “check schedule”. Place the visual schedule at his/her work area. Once he/she completes the work activity say “finished” and put the picture in the finished slot or draw a line through the activity depending on which visual schedule you use.
- Then he can move onto the next task, refer to the timetable until he/she has completed the daily routine.

How to Help Children with Transitions

Transitions can create confusion and sometimes anger which sometimes result in a child becoming upset or experiencing temper tantrums.

- Respect the child's need for warning. When they are engaged in an activity, it may be difficult for them to move on to the next activity. By giving warning, the child will have an easier time accepting transitions.
- Use of timer on whiteboard. Choose a timer that is easy for the child to comprehend. Older children may understand a digital clock, whereas a sand timer or hourglass may be more appropriate for younger children, whose concept of time isn't that great. When setting the timer, explain to them that when the timer goes off, it's time to switch activities. Use language the child will understand when explaining these things.
- Plan ahead. Have the timer set up and ready so that there's no confusion when it's used. Make sure that others who work with him in the school setting use the same approach. Consistency makes it easier for them to understand the concept.
- Be consistent. Use the same warning time and words every time. This makes it easier for them to understand and adjust to the transitions. By knowing what the expectations are, they will transition easier.

Class rules

Having clearly defined school rules will enable a child to build an understanding of what is socially acceptable within the school environment.



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Then during the day if the child needs a reminder an adult can point to the rule in question e.g. listening to teacher, without disrupting the flow of the lesson taking place at the time.



LANGUAGE & SPEECH

Language Strategies

- **Before communicating with the child, call their name** to get their attention and ensure that they are listening to you.
 In order to get the child's attention you may need to get down to his/her level so that they are aware that they are being spoken to. Don't assume that if the teacher gives an instruction to "everyone/all" that he/she understands that it includes them.
- **Reduce your language when speaking.**
 Language should be kept as simple as possible. Do not elaborate on comments or instructions. Use clear and unambiguous language, reduce your language when speaking to the child and provide visual support where possible.
- **Give time to process requests** – remember to wait.
 Spoken language is difficult for many children to process when anxious. Therefore assist the child by waiting for this to happen- sometimes counting to a particular number (5 or 10) will help you to wait and gives the child the extra time that he may need to respond. If you have to repeat the instruction, remember to state the instruction as it was originally given so as not to confuse the child. Utilise additional prompts if required (verbal, tactile etc).
- The child needs to follow commands and instructions led by others while in school. Therefore, **avoid using 'question' like instructions** (e.g. "will you pick the paper up please?") and **use direct commands** (e.g. "The child, pick up the paper").

Speech Strategies

If a child's speech can be difficult to understand, it is important that you use the following strategies:

- Listen to what he/she has said and not how she/he has said it
- Repeat back the words the child says correctly so that he/ she hears good examples
- Don't ask them to say the words again
- Don't 'correct' their speech by saying 'no...it's Jack's house'
- Don't pretend to understand they are likely to know you haven't understood them, instead ask the child to show you, point to it or draw it.

SELF CARE ACTIVITIES

Strategies for Lunch Time

- **Lunch Presentation** - Visual shown to indicate Lunchtime. If assistance is required encourage child to ask for same. They may require help in locating their bag and opening it, identifying and removing items and may require assistance to open



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lunchbox and their drink.

- If struggling in opening a zip on a bag or coat, attaching a loop or a keyring attached to the zip is required to aid in this. If a child is struggling with opening a lunch box, look at the task and how it can be broken down into steps. If the lunch box or beaker are difficult to open it may require changing to an easier option.
- **Visual Timer** - In the school environment if the time allocated to lunch is short, the use of a 5 minute timer will be necessary for a child to understand that lunch time is finished despite having food items left. Allow the child to start their lunch and then present the timer 5 minutes before they are expected to pack up lunch.
- **Prompting**- Physical and verbal prompts can be used to motivate and promote independence at lunchtime. Reduction of one or all prompts is the main aim.

Strategies at lunchtimes for those fussy eaters

- Use of visual cue at lunchtime as part of a visual schedule.
- Look at the cause of eating difficulty,
 - Does this child struggle with eating in a new environment,
 - Do they need their own table away from others and require gradual introduction to a table with others.
 - Are they put off by the smell or look of other children's food.
 - What is in their lunch box. What are they eating at home and can this be offered at school lunchtimes.
- Messy play activities to promote introduction of new foods. When we want children to learn about food, if they are allowed to play with food and, they should be told about what it looks like, what it smells like, what it feels like etc.(using positive terms). Looking at food, interacting with it, smelling it, touching it and tasting it are all steps towards eating it .

Please link with the team if you require further strategies in this area.

Strategies for Toileting Time

- Use of a visual cue incorporated into a visual schedule and used to indicate time for toileting. The use of visuals in teaching the steps in the toilet routine can also be used to teach the skill or when reinforcing it at times of change.
- A child may require visual, physical and/or verbal prompt to go to the bathroom.
- Timed toileting may be used if a child is in the process of being toilet trained or requires reminding to use the toilet. The use of motivators such as bubbles, books or singing can help occupy children while sitting on the toilet and encourage them to tolerate the toileting aspect of their daily routine.
- Many children will ask to use the toilet, however at times if engaged in activity or distracted they may need a reminder. If accidents are happening which are not usual for a child, look for the cause. Is it that they are busy or is it they need that time to settle in this new environment or a different bathroom. They may need to take a step back in training and require a prompt to go to the bathroom.
- A child may need reminding as to what comes next e.g. flush toilet or wash hands.
- Encourage as much independence as possible in the toileting process e.g. pulling up and down own clothes, washing hands etc.

The aim is that a child may become in time as independent as possible in toileting skills in school.

Strategies for Dressing

- Encourage the child to remove and put on their own coat, hat etc. Use a visual cue as part



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of a visual schedule Also ensure a child knows where to place their belongings, a picture card or name card on a coat hook or at their desk may be required.

- **Backward Chaining** - This is a method that can be used to help teach dressing skills. Here the adult begins the task, with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task, e.g. the adult puts the t-shirt over the child's head and helps them to get their arms through the holes. The child then pulls down the t-shirt at the front. This promotes a positive experience and teaches the child what to do as opposed to correcting them.
- Break the process involved in dressing into smaller more achievable steps for children who are struggling to gain independence in the area.

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Grasping Patterns

Encourage refined grasps when completing any fine motor activities. A pincer grasp should be encouraged when completing fine motor activities. Consider giving the child a small coin or button to hold in these fingers to give an additional prompt for this.

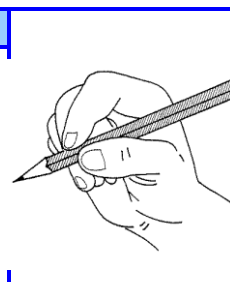
PINCER GRASP

A **pincer grasp** is considered to be the most efficient grasp for manipulating small items. It refers to the grasping of an object between the thumb and forefinger. The remaining fingers are generally tucked away into the palm of the hand.

Encourage the use of a tripod grasp when holding a pencil with the pencil resting back in the hand as demonstrated below. Consider the use of short pencils (Ikea) to prompt this grasp.

TRIPOD GRASP

A **tripod pencil grasp** is considered to be the most efficient grasp for handwriting activities. Three fingers (index, thumb and middle fingers) are placed about 1.5-2cm from point. The wrist and the little finger side of the hand need to be resting on the table at all times, in order to facilitate control of finger movements. The pencil should rest back into the hand rather than sitting upright in the air.



Colouring and Prewriting Shapes

Handwriting and prewriting skills develop in a hierarchy including developing tracing, copying and printing skills. **Tracing** refers to giving the child a broken line outline of a line, shape, letter, or number that they are to trace. **Copying** refers to giving the child a sample line, shape, letter, or number to create on their own underneath or next to the sample. **Printing** means writing, and is the hardest skill. There is no model or sample, you simply say to the child "Write the number 8", and they should correctly write a number 8. Following the hierarchy of skills, here is an example of how to teach writing skills:

Prewriting shapes follow a developmental sequence as indicated below



Once the child can trace each of the above shapes then move onto copying and finally printing. Children respond well to the use of a multi-sensory approach when teaching pre-writing shapes (e.g. using blackboard, forming shapes in the air, forming shapes to music). Introduce **each pre-writing shape individually** and do not progress onto the next shape until the child is able to independently draw each one.



Scissors Skills

Using scissors is a **very complex and challenging activity**. It requires the integration of a number of different skill sets including postural control skills, motor coordination skills, perceptual skills and organisational skills. "Cutting out" involves two separate skills:

- Firstly learning to use scissors and
- Secondly learning how to cut out on a line.

When starting to target cutting skills it is best to teach these two skills separately.

HOW TO HOLD A SCISSORS

As demonstrated in the diagram, the most efficient way to grasp the scissors is in the "**Thumbs Up**" position. This involves placing the thumb in the top loop and the middle finger in the bottom loop. If the child's fingers are very small, it is acceptable to put the middle and ring fingers through the same loop. Placing the index finger below the bottom loop provides stabilisation and directional guidance.



HOW TO HOLD THE PAPER

The paper should also be held in the "**Thumbs Up**" position. Hold the paper in the non-cutting hand, close enough to the blades to support the paper, but avoiding the fingers. The thumb of the paper holding hand should be 'on top' of the paper. Always encourage the child to cut **AWAY** from their body, not in towards the body.


Activities

- Demonstrate the correct grasping pattern as discussed above. Provide hand over hand assistance if required to help position the scissors correctly in their hands.
- Start initially through the use of snipping activities. Encourage the child to cut narrow (0.5 to 1cm) strips of coloured card/paper across the width. This is easy to do, as the scissors only need to open and close once to be successful. This is a good way to learn the grasp-release motion of scissor cutting. Complete the activity by using the snipped paper in a collage.
- As their control develops move to challenging their skills by progressing onto cutting slightly wider strips of card/paper, (approx 2 to 4cm wide). The scissors need to close twice in order to cut the strip. Work towards gradually introduce larger pieces of card/paper.
- Once they have mastered the above start to work on introducing straight lines to cut along. Start with thick lines and introduce a narrower line. You may find that it will help to reduce the width of the piece of card/paper to be cut again when introducing lines to cut along.
- Once they have mastered cutting straight lines progress onto curved lines and then onto simple shapes (square, circle, oval, and triangle).
- Finally, progress onto cutting around shapes with corners and curves (moon, heart, star).

If a child continues to struggle with opening the scissors it may be helpful to consider getting a pair of self-opening scissors to make the activity easier for them until their hand control develops further. These scissors can generally be purchased online or in arts and crafts stores and have a little spring loaded switch that you can flick to make remain in an open bladed position mean all they has to do is squeeze them shut to cut the paper. An example of one type of these scissors is presented below:



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	<p>Koopy Scissors are a type of self-opening scissors that help with the development of scissors skills. The scissors open automatically with a spring actions. These scissors can also be used as a normal scissor as there is the option to unclip the spring.</p> 
<p>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS</p>	<p>Basic gross motor skills are often defined as fundamental movement skills (FMS) as they are the basic building blocks for more complex and specialised movement skills and patterns used in play, games, sports, dance, gymnastics, outdoor education and physical recreation activities.</p> <p>A child should be given the opportunity to master the 12 fundamental movement skills (Catch, skip, hop, skip, leap, side gallop, static balance, sprint run, vertical jump, overarm throw, two hand strike, dodge). These skills can be further divided into 3 categories as it makes planning, teaching and assessment easier;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Locomotor skills: These involve transporting the body in any direction from one point to another. Examples include, crawling, running, hopping, galloping, skipping, leaping, side gallop. - Balance/body management skills: balancing the body while remaining still in one place or during motion. Examples include; static balance (standing on one leg, stopping) and dynamic balance (walking on a line or beam, climbing steps or stairs, climbing) - Ball/object control skills: the control of implements by the body (bats, raquets, hoops) or objects (balls) either by hand or by foot. Examples include: catching, throwing (underhand, overhand), kicking, striking, bouncing, dribbling. <p>The first 8 years is the perfect time to develop and perfect these skills. It is estimated that it takes a child 4-10 hours of instruction time before they become proficient in any one FMS. Start out by picking 3-4 FMS to master as each child's ability becomes more proficient gradually start by introducing the other FMS. Research has shown that children who develop FMS are more likely to engage in sport and physical activity throughout adolescence and adulthood leading to a healthier lifestyle. Some children may require for these activities/PE classes to be adapted to accommodate their physical difficulties or level of functioning. Information around this may be provided through liaising with the child's physiotherapist.</p>
<p>CORE STABILITY</p>	<p>Core strength refers to the balanced development of the muscles in the abdominals and lower back that work together to support the spine and hold the body upright. The muscles around the hip and shoulder girdle also form part of the core. It is the ability of all these muscles to work together that enables us to stabilise our bodies during movement. Strong cores are the building blocks for developing gross motor skills and fine motor skills, and if a child has a weak core it is difficult for them to maintain a stable base enabling coordination of the arms and legs.</p> <p>If a child has poor stability, you may notice the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slouching/slumped posture in their seat and finds sitting upright tiring - Leans on walls or other people - Has difficulty with carrying out both fine and gross motor activities - Reduced attention/concentration with effects on overall classroom performance - Has difficulty with dressing and undressing activities - Reduced endurance during gross motor activities/PE classes

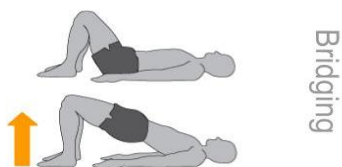


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- Difficulty in standing on one leg or loses balance easily during gross motor activities

The following are examples of some core muscle activities that can be carried out as part of PE classes:

Bridge exercises:



- Instruct the child to lift their bottom up off of the ground while keeping their feet flat and knees together.
- Their bottom should be clear off of the ground and aim to hold the position for approx. 5 secs.
- The activity can be made more challenging by dividing the class into pairs and one while child carries out a bridge another child rolls a football 'under the bridge'

Crab walk:



- A progression on the bridge exercise is the crab walk. This activity is quite demanding so set a short distance for the children's first attempt (approx. 2-3m)
- It can be included as part of a short obstacle course or follow the leader game and as endurance increases so can the distance
- Crabs walk sideways but this is a difficult movement for children to master so start out by getting them to adopt the above position (a demonstration may be required).
- As them to walk backwards a short distance by moving their hands and their feet. Some children find walking backwards very difficult so may start by walking forwards first and then progressing to the backwards movement. If they find movement difficult then they may start out by just holding the above position for 10-20 seconds first before progressing to movement.
- Ensure that they keep their back and bottom up off of the ground; placing a beanbag on their tummy as a visual prompt can work well as they have to keep their back straight to avoid it falling off onto the ground.

Tightrope walking:



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- Draw a line on the floor and encourage the child to walk on the line without stepping off.
- If the child has difficulty in keeping their balance verbally and visually prompt them to tighten their tummy muscles while walking
- A progression of this activity is walking heel to toe which is more difficult or by getting the child to stop, pick up a ball or a beanbag placed on one side and while maintaining their balance on the one throwing the beanbag or ball into a basket placed on the other side of the line or a short distance in front.
- A further progression of this activity is walking on a raised balance bench using a heel to toe gait pattern.



Tummy skittles:



- You will need skittles and one medium sized ball
- Instruct the child to lie on their tummy and lift their head and arms overhead maintaining their chest and lower body on the ground.
- Throw the ball at the skittles and then return slowly to the ground and get ready to throw again.
- A progression of this exercise is placing the skittles a further distance ahead or by using a slightly heavier ball.

Wall push- ups:



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- Stand facing a wall (two feet away) with feet slightly apart
- Place arms in front of you with hands flat on the wall, fingertips facing ceiling and elbows slightly bent.
- While keeping hands and feet in place, bend elbows to lean into the wall until your nose gets close to the wall
- Push through hands and arms to push back to start position.

Superhero exercise:



- A further progression of the tummy skittles exercise is 'the superman' exercise
- Instruct the child to lie face down with their arms by their side.
- Instruct them to extend both arms out in front of them reaching as far as they can with palms facing down
- Lift both legs and arms up off of the ground as if flying. Aim to hold this position for 5-10 secs and then relax slowly back to the ground
- A progression of this exercise is raising the arm and leg on the same time for 2-3 secs and then progress to alternate arm and leg raises while keeping tummy and back muscles tight.

Bear crawl:



- This activity uses all the major muscle groups and helps children to develop strength, co-ordination and balance.
- Instruct the child to get down on the floor with their palms and feet flat on the ground. Their back should be straight and their bottom should not be sticking up in the air.
- Instruct them to;
Shift your weight onto your left arm and move your right arm forward. Shift your weight onto your right leg and move your left leg forward.



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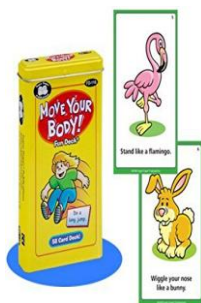
Next shift your weight onto your right arm and move your left arm forward. Shift your weight onto your left leg and move your right leg forward.

- Aim to complete 6 steps approximately initially as this activity can be quite difficult
- As strength and endurance aim to crawl forwards 3-4m or the width of the room in this position.

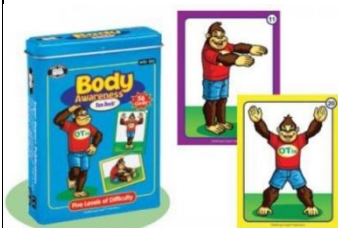
USEFUL RESOURCES



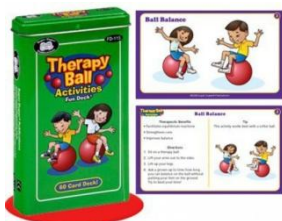
http://www.thinkingtoys.ie/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=FUN+DECK&page=4&product_id=2947



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[HTTP://WWW.THINKINGTOYS.IE/INDEX.PHP?ROUTE=PRODUCT/PRODUCT&FILTER_NAME=FUN+DECK&PAGE=2&PRODUCT_ID=2949](http://www.thinkingtoys.ie/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=FUN+DECK&page=2&product_id=2949)



http://www.thinkingtoys.ie/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=THERAPY+BALL+ACTIVITIES&product_id=3069

USEFUL WEBSITES

Movement songs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MugzDjGDYjo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5RUzkySseE>

Fine Motor and Sensory stars

<https://www.toolstogrowot.com/>

Social Stories

www.thegraycenter.org

Visual Supports

www.visualsforlearning.com

www.do2learn.com

www.twinkl.co.uk



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Boardmaker Software

www.boardmakeronline.com

Gross Motor

<http://www.phecanada.ca/programs/physical-literacy/what-physical-literacy/fundamental-movement-skills>

<http://learning.gaa.ie/ABC>

<http://learning.gaa.ie/HaveABall>

<https://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/fms/>

<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/core-exercises-for-kids.html>

<http://www.smartcc.co.uk/smart-smartmoves.html>

<http://www.getirelandactive.ie/Professionals/Education-/Primary/Resources/HSE-Fundamental-Movement-Skills-poster.pdf>

If you have any queries please contact East Limerick Children's services via the **Contact Form** attached. School visits are restricted due to the current demands on this service. We endeavour to provide support via telephone or email where appropriate, following discussion at our fortnightly team meeting.

Signed,

East Limerick Children's Services Early Intervention Team