



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curraclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Press Release for *Children's School Lives (CSL)* study

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) today welcomes the publication of *Children's School Lives in Junior Infants*, the third report from the *Children's School Lives* Study. Initiated in 2018, *Children's School Lives* is an exciting and unique study which follows 4,000 children in 189 schools through their primary years to learn, in detail, about and from their experiences. The innovative study design and mixed methods approach draw on significant expertise and experience, nationally and internationally, in longitudinal research. It is carried out by University College Dublin's (UCD) School of Education on behalf of the NCCA.

Minister for Education Norma Foley TD said: *I warmly welcome the third report from the Children's School Lives study being published by the NCCA and UCD's School of Education today. This report gives us a unique insight into the positive experiences of young children and their families as they transition from preschool and begin their primary school education.*

This report focuses on the experiences of 128 junior infants classes in 83 primary schools across Ireland. The timeline for gathering the data about the children, their families and schools began in Autumn 2019 and continued into the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the first lockdown in Spring 2020. It includes data on the family background and context of the children as well as capturing information on school types and the backgrounds of the teachers and principals. The report captures the experiences of children and parents during the important transition from early childhood settings to their first year in primary school, including:

- Class size and composition
- The school day
- Subject enjoyment
- The learning environment and curriculum
- Teaching and learning approaches.

Professor Mary O'Sullivan, NCCA Chairperson, explained: *Research is a cornerstone of the Council's work in advising on curriculum and assessment. Ground-breaking research like the Children's School Lives longitudinal study, will make a hugely significant contribution to the Council's work in redeveloping the primary curriculum.*

Arlene Forster, NCCA Chief Executive, noted: *Early childhood is a time of being and becoming, a time which provides important foundations for children's learning and for life itself. Much is written about the crucial importance of these early years, yet, we have little research in Ireland that focuses*

exclusively on this period. The Children's School Lives study is uniquely placed to help us learn about and understand what it feels and looks like to be a young child in their first year in primary school.

Assistant Professor Seaneen Sloan, a Lead Researcher on the study at the UCD School of Education said: *We are delighted to launch this third report from the Children's School Lives study, which provides a unique insight into infant classrooms in primary schools in Ireland. The early years of primary school are crucially important for children, not just in terms of their academic development, but as a foundation for their holistic social and emotional development and wellbeing. Our findings highlight the work of teachers and principals in creating a positive learning environment in junior infant classrooms, and the value placed on this by children and their families.*

The NCCA expresses deep and sincere thanks to the children, their parents and families, and to all their teachers and school leaders in the participating schools across the country for agreeing to share their stories for the duration of the study. The NCCA also thanks and commends the work of the UCD Research Team and looks forward to future reports from the study so that we can continue to learn, in detail, about children's lived experiences of primary school and use this important learning to help shape the redeveloped primary curriculum.

Social Media:

@cslstudyUCD

@ncca.ie

@schoolofEdUCD

#JuniorInfantsCSL

#primarydevelopments

<End>

Notes to Editors

You can access further information on the *Children's School Lives (CSL) Study* by visiting

www.cslstudy.ie

All reports published so far can be accessed on this website.

Reports 1 and 2 were published in December 2020:

- *Children's School Lives - An Introduction, Report No. 1*
- *Experiences of Remote Teaching and Learning in Ireland During the COVID-19 Pandemic (March - May 2020).*

Contacts:

Professor Dympna Devine, UCD School of Education, at 086 3713058

or dympna.devine@ucd.ie

Assistant Professor Seaneen Sloan, UCD School of Education, at +44 7391 257815 or

seaneen.sloan@ucd.ie

Dr Patrick Sullivan, Deputy CEO, NCCA, at 087 988 4896 or patrick.sullivan@ncca.ie

Background information to the study:

The *Children's School Lives* (CSL) study was launched on October 25, 2018 and is significant as it is the only nationally representative study of primary school experiences with children, parents, principals and teachers linked together by classrooms and schools. The study is carried out by the University College Dublin's (UCD) School of Education on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Children themselves—their lived experiences and their voices—are at the heart of this ground-breaking study. The first of its kind in Ireland, the research is generating rich, in-depth insights into what it's like to be a child in primary school in the third decade of the twenty-first century. Relationships are integral to high quality educational experiences in children's formative years and the study is helping to illuminate how their interactions and experiences shape and are shaped by schools as communities, institutions, and as a system.

The study follows two cohorts of children. One cohort began the study in the preschool year prior to school entry and will finish in second class, and a second cohort started in second class in primary school and will finish in first year in post-primary school. Focusing on themes such as engagement; school and teaching cultures; transitions; wellbeing; equality, diversity and inclusion; and learning outcomes, *Children's School Lives* enables us to hear directly from children across this diverse school population. The study also focuses on the voices of their teachers, school leaders, parents and, in some cases, their grandparents as we learn about the children's experience of moving from preschool to primary, of growing and learning through the eight years of primary school, and moving on to post-primary.