



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curaclaim 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: Preschool to Primary School Transition*, the fourth 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 welcome the fourth report from the Children's School Lives study being published by the NCCA and UCD's School of Education today. This report highlights the significance of the key education transition from preschool to primary school in Ireland from the perspectives of children, their parents, early years educators and primary teachers. The report is timely as thousands of young children and their families from all around the country prepare to begin Junior Infants as the new school year commences. The report aligns with the messages from the Chief Inspector's Report (2016 – 2020) highlighting the need to build relationships and lines of communication between preschools and primary schools.*

The report focuses on the transition from preschool to primary school. This transition is a significant event not only in the lives of the children, but also their families. The report captures the experiences of children, parents/guardians, early years educators and primary teachers, and includes findings such as:

- Children were generally very positive, saying they liked going to school, liked their teacher and had made friends in class
- Teachers rated social, emotional and self-care skills as most important for children starting primary school
- Almost all parents/guardians of children in Junior Infants reported that their child had attended an early years setting prior to starting primary school
- There is a need to strengthen the collaboration and cooperation happening between preschools and primary schools in supporting children's transitions.

Welcoming the report, Ms Emer Egan, NCCA's Interim Chairperson, highlighted the importance of rigorous and robust research evidence to support practice in educational settings. She noted: *Findings such as those in the report published today make a significant contribution to better understanding the experiences of young children at this critical juncture in their educational journey. Such understanding enhances the Council's curriculum development work.*

Arlene Forster, NCCA Chief Executive, commented: *Findings from this new report confirm a positive experience for the majority of children as they start primary school. Relationships and information-sharing between preschools and primary schools are central to this, highlighting the importance of*

resources such as NCCA's Mo Scéal reporting templates and the need for opportunities for the two professions to meet and work together to support young children at this time in their lives.

Dr Seaneen Sloan, a lead researcher on the study at the UCD School of Education said: *The findings in this report emphasise the importance of preschool experiences in children's school lives, supporting their early learning and development and providing a firm foundation for primary school. Our findings demonstrate parents' appreciation of the preschool services available in Ireland and the funding provided for this through the ECCE programme.*

Prof Dympna Devine, principal investigator, commented: *The findings are testament to the strategic importance of continued state investment in early childhood education as a public good. Such investment provides immediate support to families in a crucial period of child development, while building capacity longer term in our education system, and society, through targeted investment at a key transition point in children's lives. Continued value is to be gained from building stronger links between the early childhood education and primary school sectors.*

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:

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#JuniorInfantsCSL

#primarydevelopments

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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).*

Report 3 *Children's School Lives in Junior Infants* was published in December 2021.

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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 groundbreaking 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.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is a statutory body of the Department of Education.

The twenty-five members of the Council are appointed by the Minister for a four-year term. The members represent the partners in education, industry and trade union interests, parents' organisations and other educational interests. The Council also includes one nominee each of the

Minister for Education and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Minister for Education appoints the Chairperson.

The Council is supported in its work by three boards and a number of development groups. Members of these represent similar stakeholders to Council.

The day-to-day work of the Council is led by the Chief Executive Officer supported by a full-time executive staff.