

THE IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY (IACP) PROVIDE ADVICE TO PARENTS WITH NEW SCHOOL STUDENTS

The first week of September will see thousands of Irish children experience their first day in Primary, and Secondary, school. A lot of children will await this day with apprehension, but they need not be so daunted, says the IACP.

The IACP offers some practical advice for parents, whose children are presenting as anxious on their first day in a new environment. This advice will allow the transitions to be as seamless as possible.

IACP Chair Ray Henry says, "We can all feel a tinge of anxiety when faced with the unknown. This fear can particularly affect children. It can cause a lot of parents to worry but bear in mind that schools are expert in putting their new pupils at ease."

Parents can do a few things before the first day to help familiarise their children with the new situation, such as visiting the school, introducing their children to their new teachers and principals, and taking a tour of the school to accustom their children to this new environment.

It can also be helpful to meet with other parents whose children are also starting in the same school. Schools may be able to help parents contact others who are in the same situation and many schools have parent groups and associations.

Parents could where possible encourage a healthy diet, and sleep regimen in the weeks leading up to school.

According to Mr Henry, there are some things that parents can speak to their children about ahead of their first day to help them to settle in and to feel comfortable.

"Encourage your child to become comfortable with questions, like 'what do I do if I need to go to the toilet?' – this will help them ease any worries they may have about issues like this. It also shows that the teacher will be helpful to them," Henry concludes.

Parents should encourage their child to be friendly and helpful to all their classmates and suggest to them to ask others to play with them. Joining after school clubs may also help.

**IACP tips for starting school:**

Introduce and familiarise your child with their new school before they start  
Set up play dates for your child with new classmates before school starts

- Make the process of preparing (buying uniforms and school books) fun activities for your children
- Establish a good sleeping and eating routine in the weeks beforehand
- Encourage your child to ask their teacher questions
- Become familiar with the teachers in your child's school
- Encourage your child be inclusive to other children, in asking them to play
- Talk to your child about every aspect of their day and be excited for their experiences
- Monitor changes in their behaviour
- Talk to your child about any fears they may have
- Speak to a teacher if issues arise

## **Ends**

### **Notes to Editor:**

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Established in 1981, the IACP identify, develop and maintain professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. The IACP aim to protect the public by promoting best practice and the professional development of its members. IACP is the largest professional body of counsellors and psychotherapists in the Republic of Ireland with over 4,200 members nationwide. IACP provide a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor/psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

### **Ray Henry:**

Ray Henry is an IACP accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist with over 20 years' experience. He has served in numerous positions on the Board of Directors at IACP, he is currently the Chair.

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