



Guidelines for transitioning in early childhood education in the Republic of Ireland

With a young child who is or may be gender variant / gender non-conforming, it is important to listen to what the child wants and needs. For some children, this may involve wearing clothes they prefer, while others may also wish to be called by a different name and pronoun. It is important for family members, especially parents/guardians, to reassure the child and to know themselves that a child can 'change back' or reverse any decisions they make. All playschools are different, and many can be quite flexible and open to change. While there is no single set way to manage a social transition within a playschool, listed below are key things to consider.

Within discussion between the student, parent/guardian, and school, consider developing a transition plan that considers and accounts for:

1. Starting date of social transition
2. Name, language, and pronoun: The student's preferred name, gender identity, and pronoun (he, she, they) should be discussed and decided (if applicable).
3. Clothing: The student's preferred clothing be discussed and decided (if applicable).
4. Informing the staff: The playschool teacher should inform the playschool staff and administration. In-school education and resources should be provided to these staff to support them in understanding issues around gender and gender non-conformity in children.
5. Informing other families: The playschool teacher may inform other parents by letter or individually depending on the size of the school about the social transition. The teacher should make themselves (and sometimes TENI) available after school to answer any questions they have particularly about how to explain about the transition to their own child. Many parents need reassurance that experimentation with gender expression is not something their child will 'catch' and that this transition will not encourage their child to want to 'change' gender.
6. Informing the students: The teacher might also consider reading story books to the other students in the play school about gender and identity. There are a number of story books suitable for this age group that teachers may use. It should be noted that young children at this age generally do not need much explanation; they are usually quite accepting of the transition.
7. Bullying: The playschool teacher and administration are responsible for ensuring that no bullying is allowed amongst the students.