

# LEARNING AT HOME:

## Ideas for parents and carers about learning at Second Level



When your child is in P5, P6 or P7 we say that they are learning at Second Level. For some children learning at this Level can also be earlier or later. Part of our learning at school is about **relationships, being safe, growing up, their bodies** and what we call **the baby's story** and **being a parent**. This is part of our Health and Wellbeing learning called *Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood* education.

**You are your child's first and most important teacher.** With your child at school there is the opportunity for parents/carers and schools to work together to help your child to learn. In the pages that follow we explore how you might support learning, there are also some ideas from parents who have been asked about what they do to support their child's learning.

### Learning about relationships

At home you can do these things - some of these things are kind of obvious and you will be doing them day-to-day, we mention them just because they do back-up learning at school.

- **We are all unique!** When you chat and play together remind your child just how important and special they are. Talk about all the things they are good at and what you love about them. You can also have them think about what makes their brothers, sisters, cousins or friends unique and special.
- **Making and having friends.** At this age our children start to become a bit more independent and their friendships become more important to them. This also means that 'fall-outs' become more common. At home you can encourage your child to be friendly to others, to be kind and to do their best to not get involved in arguments and fall-outs. But when your child has a problem with a friend you can also spend time just talking and helping them to figure out the best way to fix a problem – this can include speaking to someone at school to see if we can help too.
- **Being a boy or a girl.** At school we encourage children to be happy with who they are, with the kind of girl or boy they want to be. At school we will do our best to treat all children equally. At home you can encourage your child to be who they want to be, to share tasks at home, and to help them learn to respect other children whoever they are.
- **Loving relationships.** At this age children might already feel some pressure to have boyfriends/girlfriends. You may have already heard someone ask your child: *Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend yet?* This can get in the way of girls and boys simply being friends. At school we recognise that the early stages of puberty mean that children might start to develop feelings for others, and of course that's okay, but it would also be great if at school and at home we help children to simply be children and to play and have fun with each other with no pressure to be in relationships. When we learn about relationships at school it is about helping the child to be confident about

themselves and to imagine that when they are older, and ready for a relationship, this should be with someone who shows respect and care for them.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

*“Have talked about friendships with my daughter. Feel that it’s helpful to talk at their level and relate it to their friends. Also talked about situations where she had experienced problems and what may have helped her to deal with this.”*

*“He’s very pally with girls and says ‘she’s not my girlfriend!’”*

*“There’s lots of pressure on lassies, stuff about their weight. Short skirts. And boys, their behaviour needs to be macho, the way they talk like men.”*

*“At school attitudes and experiences open up. You have to talk with him. I want him to talk about friendships and learn how to manage experiences. To help create who he’ll be. I want him to take the right path.”*

## Learning about being safe

At this age an important area for learning is to help our children be safe, to recognise and trust their feelings, and to remember who to go to if they need to talk or get help. At home you could think about doing some of these things:

- **Social media and being safe and smart online.** At this age children might be online more, doing homework, chatting to friends, playing games or watching YouTube. At home you can talk about how being online is like being in a place, and wherever you are you need to be and feel safe. You can help your child learn about what information not to share and about coming to you if something they see or hear upsets them. When we are learning about this at school we will let you know and suggest some things you can look at with your child to help your family learn about being safe online.
- **Feeling safe and unsafe.** Children at this age can be helped to recognise, understand and trust their feelings. We can help children to recognise feelings that they feel with their body (in a nervous tummy for example) and feelings in their head (when you just know something isn’t right). You can talk to your child about their feelings and what they feel when they are nervous, unhappy, worried or scared.
- **Different kinds of abuse and neglect that can happen to a child.** We all want the best for our children and for them to be carefree. At school we will learn about abuse which can be physical or sexual abuse or neglect. We do this because we want children to understand these things are wrong, and that a child is never to blame if this happens. At home, when watching TV, or reading a book, these kinds of situations will come up – you can talk to your child and help them understand that every child has the right to be safe and cared for.
- **What we mean by consent.** Consent means asking someone’s permission to do something. Learning about consent helps children to understand that they are the boss of their body. We will share some information with you when we are learning

about consent at school, but basically learning at home could also be about encouraging children to ask for permission for things and understand and accept when the answer is yes or no.

- **Who they can go to for help and support.** Not only are you your child's first and most important teacher, you are also their most important support. At school we will encourage the children to think about adults they trust and can go to if they have a question or worry – you can do this at home too. You can encourage your child to talk about adults in school that they like and trust.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

*"I don't feel I have enough understanding to ensure I'm doing what I should be to help keep my child safe."*

*"The kids are on the tablet, they ask for Facebook because their pals are on it. If you come in the room they close the page, you can be in the other room and not have a clue."*

*"I talk to him about bullying so that he understands how he likes to be treated and how he should treat other people."*

*"I am teaching her about what's right and what's wrong and that she should treat people the way that she would want to be treated."*

## Learning about growing up and bodies

By the time children get to the final years of Primary school there are changes happening to their bodies – they are growing up fast. At home you will be dealing with things like your child wanting privacy, being more independent and the early changes that come with puberty – both body changes and strong feelings.

When it comes to learning about these things at home we would like you to think about what are sometimes called 'teachable moments'. There are the times when we don't necessarily plan learning, things just pop up and there's an opportunity to help a child learn. Here are a few ideas.

- **Privacy and 'my body belongs to me!'** When your child goes to the toilet, goes swimming, or has a bath or shower there are opportunities to encourage them to think about what's private. Unless you have to help, children can do things independently. There will probably be lots of time at home where you can remind your child that they are the boss of their body, children can learn that being touched is their choice, and that no-one should touch or ask about their private parts.
- **How the bodies of both girls and boys change as they grow.** At school this means learning about puberty including how feelings change. All children will learn about physical changes, like what happens to their hair, skin, body shape, breasts, smell, periods (menstruation), erections and wet dreams. We will talk about personal hygiene. We understand that it might be a wee bit embarrassing to talk about some

things at home, but at school we will do this in a very matter-of-fact way. It's all about basic human development and happens to us all!

- **What 'having sex' is and about contraception and condoms.** When we talk about sex at school this is explained in very basic ways. We learn about sex as part of adult loving relationships. We do this because, as you will know, children ask questions about this stuff. We also explain what contraception and condoms are, again because children hear about these things and we want them to have good, accurate, basic information. We will share the learning activities with you before we do them, so that you can think about how you would like to talk about it at home.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

*"We're just talking about things as they happen."*

*"They ask questions and you have to be honest, about hair on their body, we want them to be happy with the changes. It's a different generation, you need to talk."*

*"We are always open in the home about the names of genitals and don't give them childish names. We speak about what happens when he has an erect penis and why this happens. We answer any questions honestly but with age in mind."*

*"My daughter was there every step of the way when deciding to have more children to pregnancy and birth so is well clued up on this!"*

## Learning about the baby's story and being a parent/carer

At school children learn about how life is created, about pregnancy and birth. When they are younger we do this by talking about plants and animals, and this moves on to talking about human life. We do this because children are curious, they really want to know and its best to be very straightforward. Here are some ideas about how to do this at home. **There are some really great books that help with these conversations. Check out the booklist that follows.**

- **How are babies made?** At school, we will talk about how a baby is made in simple terms that describe sex and conception. Before we do this lesson we will share the PowerPoint and words that we use so that you can support this learning at home.
- **Pregnancy.** At school, we will talk about how the baby grows in the mum's womb. At home or in the family or with friends there may be opportunities for children to meet and chat to women who are pregnant; they will be curious and fascinated to find out more! Pregnancies at home with the arrival of new brothers or sisters or cousins are great opportunities to learn about the developments across a pregnancy.
- **How are babies born?** At school children will learn about the baby getting ready to be born and coming down from the womb and out of the mum's vagina. At home you can talk about your child's birth, or the birth of siblings. Maybe you have some early photos to share.
- **Being a parent and thinking about what kind of parent they would be.** Although very young themselves we want children to learn at school about all the things a

child needs to be healthy, happy and safe. Learning about being a parent helps children understand what an important job this is. You can use personal experiences to help your child learn, helping them to understand and recognise all the things you do for them, from when they were a baby to the age they are now.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

*“We ask them about how we are as parents. Like should we do things differently? They have a right to their own voice. We want our children to understand how to be a good parent, so they can’t have free reign, they can’t be demanding. They know how to behave, they’re polite.”*

*“I’m always honest and proactive in discussion when opportunities present themselves such as discussing how I gave birth and what was involved in making a baby - age appropriate though.”*

## The importance of listening and talking

Sometimes you just need to be in the right place at the right time. At those moments your child will show an emotion you pick up on, maybe they will look like they need to tell or ask you something, or maybe the question will just pop out. There’s no doubt being a parent or carer can be tough sometimes. But when you can, be there for the chat, the game or the bedtime book.

*“It’s about talking about issues. He knows that he can come to me or other family members - I have told him there is not a topic that is off limits.”*

## Books for Reading Together

We have some of these books at school, others you should be able to borrow from the local Library – if they don’t have them they might be able to order them for you. Enjoy!

### **Stories for boys who dare to be different**

Ben Brooks (ISBN 978-1-78747-198-6)

True tales of amazing boys (who became famous and not so famous men) who changed the world.

### **Goodnight stories for rebel girls**

Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo (ISBN 978-0-141-98600-5)

The stories of heroic women (some famous and some not so famous) from around the world.

### **What's Happening to Me? (Girls Edition) (Facts of Life)**

Susan Meredith ISBN-10: 9780746069950

A sensitive, detailed and informative guide to female puberty, this book will prove invaluable for both young girls (from 9 years old+) and their parents alike, tackling key subjects from the physical changes that occur at this time to practical matters; entertaining, approachable and authoritative.

**What's Happening to Me? (Boys Edition) (Facts of Life)**

Alex Frith (ISBN 9780746076637)

The companion book for boys (age 9+) who will find this book answers a lot of their questions and help them to worry less about the changes in their bodies.

**It's perfectly normal**

Robie E. Harris and Michael Emberley (ISBN 978-0-763-62610-5)

A book for children aged 10+ about changing bodies, growing up, sex and sexual health.

**Usborne facts of Life: Growing up**

Susan Meredith (ISBN 0-7460-3142-4)

What's happening to me? Why is my body changing? Why do I feel different? A book all about adolescence, body changes and sex.

**Personal Hygiene? What's that got to do with me?**

Pat Crissey (ISBN 978-1-84310-796-5)

Introduces personal hygiene and teaches essential skills and creates good habits for life – from dragon breath to dirty fingernails to smelly armpits and more.

**Let's Talk about Sex**

Robie E. Harris (ISBN 978-1-84428-174-9)

A book that tells pre-teens and teenagers what they need to know about sex. Down to earth and humorous.