

**McGrath, Geraldine, 2009, *The experiences and challenges of First Year Students transferring from primary to post-primary school and how the post-primary school addresses their needs.***

## **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

This study was undertaken to examine three main areas. 1. To examine the experiences of first year pupils during the transition to post primary school. 2. To identify the challenges faced by pupils during the transition to post primary school. 3. To examine the preparations made by the pastoral care staff and first year class tutors to address the needs of the pupils during the transition. Both post-primary schools involved in this study are situated in the suburbs of a modern city with a population of approximately seventy thousand people.

The questionnaire was distributed to a total of two hundred and fifty first year pupils from school A and school B. Interviews were held with the personnel involved in the pastoral care team which includes the Deputy Principal, the Year Head of first year, the Guidance Counsellor and the Chaplain. The school Principal and eight first year class tutors were also interviewed with the purpose of gaining an overview of their perceptions of the preparations made by the post-primary schools in addressing the need of the pupils during the transfer. Having spent eight years in the post-primary school system, transferring to post-primary school not only poses many challenges to the pupils themselves but also to the staff of the post-primary schools concerned.

Taking into account the range of changes to which first year pupils are required to adapt, it stands to reason that the effectiveness of the transition experience depends on the extent to which individual post-primary schools put in place appropriate programmes and procedures which support pupils in all aspects of transition.

The valuable experiences of a cross section of pupils and teachers were drawn upon in this study in examining the preparations made by the pastoral care staff and first year class tutors to address the needs of the pupils during the transition. Recommendations were made which would, if adopted, further enhance the experience of transfer to post-primary education for all concerned.