



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Children's School Lives (CSL):

National longitudinal cohort study of primary schooling in Ireland

Introduction

Following a tender process in early 2018, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) awarded the contract for a national longitudinal study of children's experience of primary school in Ireland, to University College Dublin. The study, entitled *Children's School Lives (CSL)*, presents an exciting and unique opportunity to follow children through their primary school years and to document and learn, in detail, about and from these experiences. In this way, the study will provide rich pictures of the experiences of children in primary schools in Ireland, and how these experiences shape and are shaped by schools as communities, institutions, and as a system. This learning will feed directly into the NCCA's work on curriculum and assessment as well as inform wider educational discourse and policy development.

The study's core management team includes Professor Dympna Devine (Principal Investigator [PI]) and Assistant Professor Jennifer Symonds (Co-PI) along with Assistant Professor Seaneen Sloan (Co-Investigator) and Assistant Professor Deirdre McGillicuddy. As part of the management structure, the team is supported by

- a Steering Committee
- a Children's Advisory Panel
- an Adult Stakeholder Panel
- an International Advisory Panel.

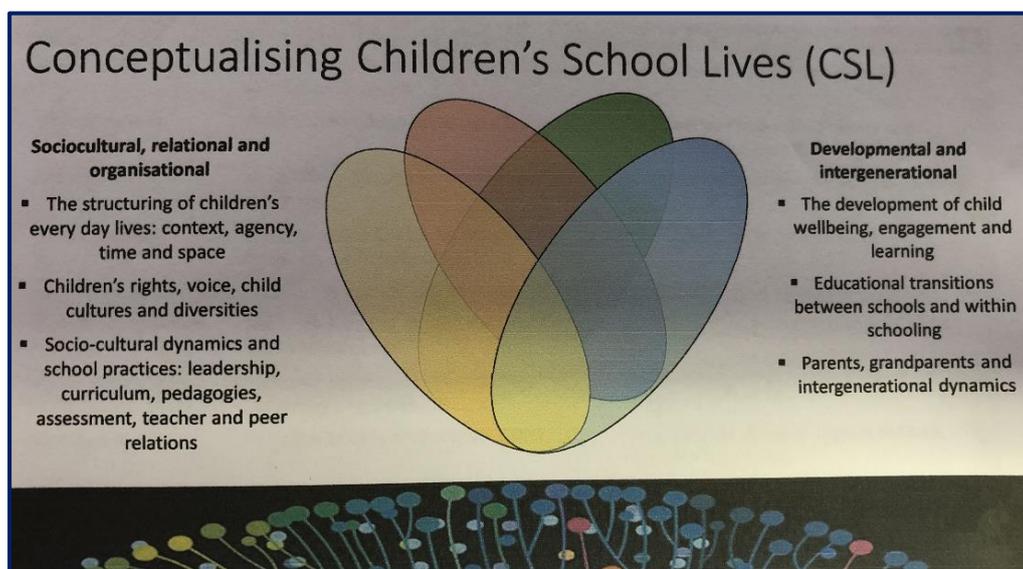
Key features

Below is a synopsis of key features of the study.

- It's an Irish nationally representative study of children in the upper end of early childhood and in primary education.

- The study has quantitative and qualitative components.
- Approximately 4,300 children from 200 primary schools will be involved in the quantitative aspect of the study. Nested within this, children in 14 case study primary schools will be involved in an in-depth mixed methods investigation.
- The study uses a cross-sequential longitudinal design with two cohorts of children. Cohort A are in their last year of preschool in 2018/2019 and will be followed annually for a total of five years until they finish 2nd class. Cohort B are in 2nd class in 2018/2019 and will be followed annually for six years until they finish their first year in post-primary school.
- Children's voices are prioritised at each wave of data collection. This focus on capturing the lived experiences of children in school and their interactions with, and across family, school and community, is seen below in Figure 1 outlining the conceptual framework underpinning the study.

Figure 1: The study's conceptual framework



- The study also prioritises educational transitions. This is reflected in an intensification of data collection and analysis around the transition to primary school for Cohort A, and the transition to post-primary for Cohort B.
- The study will give rise to a rich set of mixed methods data. This will be generated through a quantitative multi-informant study involving repeated measures surveys of children, teachers and parents in each school context and a social network analysis across school transition. The qualitative component of the study will involve interviews with children, teachers, parents and grandparents, and ethnographic observation of children's learning and wellbeing in classroom contexts.
- The study also includes a rich set of objective quantitative data such as systematic observation of pedagogy and records of school structures and procedures from school principals and researchers.

- The first wave of data gathering is planned for Q1 in 2019.
- An interactive website will be developed for use by the public and by study participants. Separate pages will be used to detail the study design and methods, and to provide information for participants, researchers, schools and policy-makers. The website will also be used to publish study reports, resources for participants such as copies of information and consent forms, and details of data collection plans.

For updates on the study, follow on Twitter [@CSLstudyUCD](#).