



# Supporting the primary to secondary school transition

with Tips for Supporting Transition during school closures

Leicestershire Educational  
Psychology Service (2020)

# The importance of a successful and supported transition

- ▶ The transition from primary to secondary school is an important life transition that can affect children's attainment and wellbeing in the longer term (The School Transition and Adjustment Research Study, STARS, 2013).
- ▶ The school environment and the connection of parents and children to their school are implicated in a range of positive outcomes for young people (The School Transition and Adjustment Research Study, STARS, 2013).
- ▶ Effective interventions delivered during transition periods can have long lasting positive effects (Gottfredson and Hussong, 2011).



# What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?

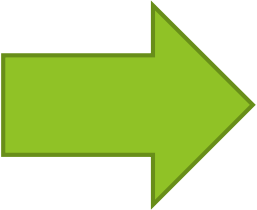
*EPPSE project (Evangelou et al, 2008). Key factors that contribute to a successful transition include:*

- ▶ Social adjustment.
  - ▶ Developing new friendships led to increased self esteem and self reported confidence.
  - ▶ Perceiving older children to be friendly supported good transitions.
- ▶ Institutional adjustment.
  - ▶ Support to get used to new routines and organisation helped children.
- ▶ Curriculum interest and continuity.
  - ▶ Close primary and secondary links, including curriculum continuity was supportive.

# What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?

No single group of children are especially vulnerable to a poor transition (STARS, EPPSE). However the studies found that:

- ▶ Children with SEND were more likely to be bullied (a key inhibitor of a successful transition).
- ▶ Children living in low SES households found it harder to get used to the new routines - but did look forward to secondary school, which had a positive effect on them developing an interest in school and school work.



An effective approach to supporting children through transition is likely to involve a combination of strategies delivered to all pupils that aim to deal with common concerns, with additional strategies for vulnerable individuals delivered on a case by case basis according to the individual's needs (**The School Transition and Adjustment Research Study, STARS**).

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/clinical-educational-and-health-psychology/research-groups/school-transition-and-adjustment>

# Tips for Supporting transitions during school closures

## Social adjustment

- ▶ Use of remote tools such as google classrooms may be helpful to begin to support children to make links with others within their tutor group and beyond. Plan fun and creative activities for children to engage in.
- ▶ Consider ways of setting up ‘buddy systems’ and ‘e-buddies’ via school emails or virtual learning environments. Setting up ICT accounts early for the current Year 6s may be helpful. This may be other Year 6 children or children who are already in the school.
- ▶ Consider children who may be the only child coming from their school as well as other more vulnerable children, including those with SEND. Use information from primary teachers to identify children at particular risk.
- ▶ Create ‘Friendly face’ videos from older pupils who will be in roles as peer mentors, leading clubs etc. Follow this through once schools are open.
- ▶ Create Year 7 tutor groups now and have virtual tutor meetings before the summer holiday.



# Tips for supporting transitions during school closures

## Institutional adjustment

- ▶ Help children to become familiar with your setting through virtual information:
  - ▶ Video clips of key staff introducing themselves (SLT, Year Heads, Inclusion Team, Department Heads, Year 7 tutors etc). Vlogs can then be added to websites and social media.
  - ▶ Photos and videos of where children will eat lunch, the toilets, the SEND base etc.
  - ▶ Videos of journeys around the school and mini tours of key areas. Key worker and vulnerable children who are currently in school could be involved in creating these. It could involve a 'hide and seek' activity where children have to spot certain objects around the school.
  - ▶ Simple maps with photographs of key areas attached.
  - ▶ Breaking down secondary vocabulary e.g. 'tutor'.
  - ▶ Videos showing a typical Year 7 timetable and how to use it.
  - ▶ Welcome booklets online
  - ▶ A 'treasure hunt' involving activities to encourage pupils to explore the school website to find answers to commonly asked questions e.g. timetable, lesson times etc.



# Tips for supporting transitions during school closures

## Institutional adjustment (and supporting parents)

The STARS study showed that the main parental worries before transition were:

- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Safety
- ▶ The amount of homework
- ▶ Adjusting to having lots of new teachers
- ▶ Making new friends



Consider how to involve parents and carers in remote and virtual transitions.

- ▶ What do they need to know or want to know? Create a frequently asked questions page on the website or social media to address common queries e.g. around uniform, timings of school day etc or upload as a leaflet.
- ▶ Consider how to get in touch remotely with the cohort of Year 6 parents. Primary staff may be able to signpost parents to your Facebook or twitter page.
- ▶ Use of technology e.g. a virtual question and answer session based on parental queries received via email; a new parent group via Facebook, moderated by school staff etc.
- ▶ Video calls to children identified as potentially vulnerable and their parents to say ‘hi’ and to begin to build support links.

# Tips for supporting transitions during school closures

## Curriculum interest and continuity

- ▶ Take opportunities to create virtual links with primary staff and their classes.
- ▶ Consider setting up simple Year 6 projects with the class teachers, with feedback and sharing involving both Year 6 teachers and Year 7 tutor staff. How are Year 6 teachers currently setting work for their pupils? Ensure that projects are fun and creative rather than having a pure academic focus.
- ▶ Consider ways of building and promoting resilience and emotional wellbeing.
- ▶ ‘All about me’ booklets could be completed by pupils and sent to their new tutors in the summer term to begin to build connections. The tutor could also send their tutor group a document all about them.
- ▶ Upload video clips of mini lockdown Science, DT, and cookery lessons at secondary school. You may be able to set mini challenges for the new starters to work on at home or pose questions to get them thinking.





# Virtual links with Primary staff

- ▶ Liaise with primary schools to identify ways to attend reviews ‘virtually’ for SEND and vulnerable children through skype, teams etc. The use of video conferencing may be helpful for parents to ‘meet’ the key staff who would usually attend these meetings in person.
- ▶ Year 6 staff can fill in the START questionnaire (on the STARS website) which helps in predicting transition success for individual pupils and will help to identify additional pupils for more targeted support.
- ▶ Via Year 6 teachers, provide resources that give children time to reflect on their time at primary and in Year 6. What was their best experience in Year 6? What have they learned that they are now good at? What challenges have they overcome? What would they like the secondary school to know about them?
- ▶ Share a video blog with the Year 7 head of year (and/or tutors) answering questions that Year 6 pupils have collated.

**Your New School**

Here is an example of a rating scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

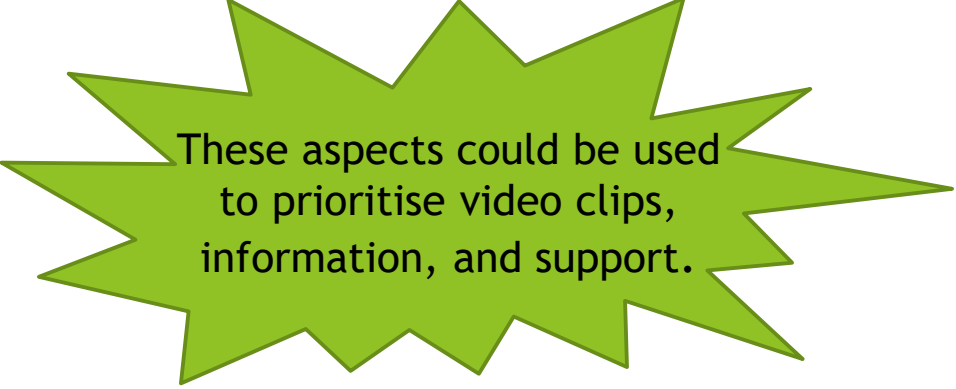
Not at all worried 
→
 I get extremely worried about it

We would like to ask you some questions about any concerns or worries you may have about your new secondary school. Please rate each of the following using the scale above.  
For example, if you were really worried you would put a 10 in the box beside it.

Making new friends		Older children		Lots of different teachers		Following a timetable	
Being bullied		Getting to school		Homework		Dinner times	
PE		Changing classes		Being able to do the work		Toilets	
Remembering equipment for school		What to do if you are feeling ill		Lots of people		Break time	
Size of school		Discipline and detentions		Losing old friends		Getting lost	
If you have any other concerns you can write in the boxes below and then rate your concerns with the same scale as above...							

# What are children most worried about?

- ▶ The STARS study showed that children's main worries before transition were:
  - ▶ Getting lost
  - ▶ Being bullied
  - ▶ Discipline and detentions
  - ▶ Homework
  - ▶ Losing old friends
- ▶ Concerns about discipline and detentions, homework and losing friends continued throughout children's first years of secondary school.
- ▶ Involve current Year 7 pupils:
  - ▶ Letters or video clips from current Year 7s about their experiences of their first year in school. This may include their fears and how these were supported or didn't come to be, clubs that they have been able to join, new friendships they have made, what they tend to do at break and lunchtimes, finding their way around the school, homework concerns, support offered by key staff etc.



These aspects could be used to prioritise video clips, information, and support.

# Supporting transitions for all

- ▶ BBC videos from secondary aged children on a range of topics around starting secondary school.
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1>
- ▶ Year 6 pupils could watch these and then send any further and more specific questions to their Year 6 teachers to be passed on to be answered by secondary staff or pupils (via FAQs, tweets/Facebook posts, video clips etc).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/teacher-resources-for-students-transitioning-to-secondary-school/zb68y9q>

**FRIENDS**  
Making new friends  
How to make lasting friendships at your new school.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**GETTING LOST**  
The size of the school  
Get used to the size of your new school and find your way around.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**FAVOURITE THINGS**  
Favourite thing about secondary school  
Some of the new and exciting opportunities to look forward to when you start secondary school.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**A DAY IN THE LIFE**  
Year 7: A day in the life  
Follow Alfie through a typical day in Year 7.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**BRAYDON VS. MR BURTON**  
Braydon vs Mr Burton: the truth about starting secondary school  
YouTuber, Braydon Bent challenges head teacher, Mr Burton about the realities of starting secondary school.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**FRIENDS**  
Will I lose my old friends?  
How to keep in touch and make new friends.  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

**CLASS-WORK**  
Coping with classwork  
Getting used to new lessons, new teachers and avoiding detention!  
STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

# Supporting transitions for all

- ▶ Young minds has resources for schools including video clips for children moving from Year 6 to Year 7. This clip reassures children that they're not alone in their worries about secondary school, that there are ways to cope with change and that there are people to talk to if things become difficult.
- ▶ <https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitioning-to-secondary-school/>
- ▶ The website also has 'top tips' for parents when supporting children through significant change, including the Year 6 to Year 7 transition.



# Transition as a process goes beyond September.

- ▶ The first year of secondary school is a window of opportunity for delivering strategies to boost pupil adaptation to the new school environment as well as pupil competence and wellbeing. This may include:
  - ▶ Extended induction processes which focus on getting the first half term 'right', including additional time to meet with mentors.
  - ▶ Staggered lunch breaks and staggered lesson starts/finishes to avoid corridor crushes.
  - ▶ Additional tutor groups sessions which focus on relationship building and friendships.
  - ▶ Ongoing personalised and targeted support for children who are having difficulty in specific areas (e.g. friendship development), or who have been identified as vulnerable from primary school information. This may include informal interventions, groups, clubs, peer mentors etc.
  - ▶ Coordination of homework between departments so that the amount and deadlines do not overwhelm pupils.
- ▶ When schools do open, staff might prioritise open evenings and early parents evenings for children who have recently moved into Year 7 to allow parents to meet with staff and to familiarise themselves with the school and the buildings.
- ▶ Children may experience bereavement before, during or after the transition period. It will be important that schools plan ways to address such issues and meet children's needs.



# Additional considerations for transition after school closures

- ▶ **Re establishing routines.** This will be difficult for many children and their families. There will be a period of adjustment for pupils where they re-establish routines, including sleep and getting up.
- ▶ **Re establishing expectations.** Pupils will have had very different experiences during the lockdown. Some will have been in school throughout, though school will have been a different place. Others will have been at home - and all would have had different home experiences. Time will be needed to re-establish and re-learn the expectations of school behaviour and learning.
- ▶ **Differences in learning.** Some children may have engaged in formal learning activities at home each school day, with a capable parent in role of 'teacher'. Others may not have engaged in any focused learning activity at all. Most children will be somewhere in between. These differences need to be supported sensitively.

These factors may be more problematic and require greater support and understanding for children who are also managing the Year 6 to Year 7 transition.



# Additional considerations

- ▶ For all transition approaches, it is crucial to consider equality of access, ensuring that all children are engaged in some way and that the most vulnerable are not unintentionally disadvantaged. This may include creating child friendly paper versions of the transition information for children who are not able to access resources and information on line. These can then be posted or dropped off at their home or primary school.
- ▶ With virtual approaches relying on technology, safeguarding principles need to always be considered. This will include any potential for virtual links to lead to cyber bullying.

